Environmental Scan of BC Post-Secondary Admissions: 2009

Prepared by: Nick Heath, Nicholas Heath Consulting Services Inc.

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

BCCAT

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Environmental Scan of B.C. Postsecondary Admissions: 2009

Executive Summary

Project Background

The project involves revisiting the work done in the late 1990s and early 2000s by BCCAT's Task Force on Standards and Processes and later by its Admissions Committee. At that time, some systemic issues were believed to be affecting the ability of students to transfer efficiently between institutions. For example, each institution at that time published its own transfer guide and these did not always agree with the BCCAT Transfer Guide.

In 2008 BCCAT commissioned an environmental scan on the possible need for system-wide work on institutional admissions processes and practices. This scan is intended to seek system input and to provide guidance on the choice of research projects and other related work in the coming year.

This report is an environmental scan evaluating the current status of admission to B.C.'s postsecondary institutions. Admission is interpreted broadly to include entry of school leavers to postsecondary institutions (the majority of admissions) and transfers of postsecondary students between institutions, but excludes graduate programs. It is not limited to transfer students.

Method

Previous reports were examined. A two-pronged survey was conducted of school counsellors and postsecondary staff working in student services or related fields. A survey of applicants was considered, but was considered impractical, given the time and resources available.

The issues covered ranged from processes and their timing, admission policies, and communication and service levels. Response to the surveys was insufficient for statistical reliability. All results are therefore indicative rather than conclusive and need to be used with caution.

Findings

Major finding

The surveys revealed that the perceptions of school counsellors and related school staff are often markedly different from those of postsecondary staff. In particular, responses contrasted in the following areas, with school counsellors being much less inclined to agree that:

- web sites of institutions are predictable and easy to navigate;
- web sites of institutions are easy to understand;
- applicants receive prompt responses to inquiries;
- applicants are treated with respect;

- admission processes are generally similar;
- admission processes need not be more similar;
- institutions are lenient on admission deadlines;
- institutions readily refund admission deposits;
- admission requirements for secondary school leavers make sense;
- secondary students have ample flexibility in course choices;
- admission requirements for secondary school leavers do not change much;
- transfer students are treated equally with direct-entry students; and
- there is no stigma associated with being a transfer student.

While one might assume that complacency is evident among postsecondary staff on these issues, survey bias and small sample sizes could be greatly affecting these results. In particular, school counsellors might have had in mind admission of their students to larger institutions, such as research universities, whereas these institutions were underrepresented in the postsecondary staff survey. This is supported by indications that the responses within the postsecondary staff group varied significantly by type of institution.

Chief criticisms of postsecondary admissions

According to the school counsellors who responded, postsecondary institutions should remedy the following problems:

- admission requirements faced by school leavers do not seem to make good educational sense;
- there are too many ad hoc local rules for entry to courses, such as first year academic English courses, that are confusing and even contradictory; and
- admission procedures and terminology are inconsistent and should be more alike.

Long-standing criticisms

These issues were also evident in earlier surveys. These might be intractable problems.

- Information is more confusing, harder to access and more full of jargon than is necessary.
- Transfer students seem to experience more delays, sometimes undue delays, than do applicants from Grade 12. (This corresponds with a growing awareness of the additional time and resources required to evaluate and award transfer credit.)

Issues of concern

One surprising finding was the number of "unsure" responses returned by post-secondary staff to some questions, raising a concern about the level of knowledge some may have about their own institutions. The breadth of staff involved in this survey, including those in individual instructional units, could be a factor.

- Some postsecondary staff seem unfamiliar with their own institutional admission procedures and policies (e.g. appeals policies, refundability of

deposits)
- Some are unaware of the existence and findings of applicant/student surveys.

Variance within postsecondary sector
Postsecondary institutions and their staff are by no means alike in their survey responses. Responses from staff at 'institutes' frequently differ from responses of other staff, presumably because this sector consists of only one institution, BCIT, whose procedures and policies frequently vary from those of other institutions. This difference was evident over a wide range of survey questions, such as the timing of admission offers and how long the applicant waits for a decision, as well as access to information on transfer credit.

Responses from staff at research universities also differ in that they are less confident that transfer students receive equal treatment and achieve their goals more easily than do direct-entry students and take the view that their admission requirements from secondary school do not change much.

Other admission problems
The surveys revealed few other systemic problems and relatively minor specific problems in the processes relating to the admission of students into B.C. postsecondary institutions. School counsellors and postsecondary staff alike felt that financial considerations were the single greatest barrier to the pursuit of postsecondary education in B.C.

Recommendations

This report makes recommendations that fall into four categories:

- to improve internal communications in postsecondary institutions;
- to correct or improve information services at these institutions;
- to initiate joint discussions among postsecondary institutions, in some cases with BCCAT, where a cooperative approach is required; and
- to initiate joint discussions among postsecondary institutions and the secondary school system, where a cooperative approach is required.

A. Recommendations mainly referring to **internal communications** in postsecondary institutions:

Recommendation 8

Each postsecondary institution should familiarize a broader group of its staff with the policies concerning deposits and the conditions under which they may be refunded.

Recommendation 13

Institutions should make their appeal processes known to all those who have dealings with new students and applicants.

Recommendation 14

It would be in the interests of each institution to give all staff who deal with new students reports of the pertinent findings from applicant and/or student surveys.

B. Recommendations for **individual postsecondary institutions**:

Recommendation 1

When postsecondary institutions review and revise their web sites, close attention should be given to making the information readily understandable to an average prospective student. Navigational consistency is also desirable. Where industry norms or standards exist, these should be followed.

Recommendation 2

Given current heavy dependency on on-line information, each institution needs to pay close attention to the presentation of admission information on its web site. Attention also is needed to ensure that appropriate updating of information occurs.

Recommendation 5

Postsecondary institutions should regularly discuss matters of common interest with school counsellors and other school personnel in their regions to enhance communication and to establish whether the differences in perception shown in this report are based on issues of significance.

Recommendation 11

Postsecondary institutions should routinely monitor the time it takes for transfer applicant admission and transfer credit decisions to be made and compare those results with their service goals and with the time required for decisions on direct-

entry applicants. If required, appropriate plans for remedy can then be developed and prioritized.

Recommendation 12

BCIT should be encouraged to conduct a survey of transfer students (or students who enter BCIT with other postsecondary credit or experience, if not actual transfer credit) to determine whether their needs are being met and if different processes or policies, such as more transparency in transfer credit, might benefit the institution and its students.

Recommendation 15

Institutions that do not regularly survey applicants and/or new students should consider doing so, to gain knowledge that will assist them in providing responsive, competitive services to applicants.

C. Recommendations requiring discussion among **postsecondary institutions jointly** and/or with **BCCAT**.

Recommendation 3

The postsecondary institutions together with BCCAT should investigate the feasibility of expanding the scope of the BC Transfer Guide to include a broader range of course and program equivalencies, taking into consideration the benefits and costs involved.

Recommendation 4

Postsecondary institutions should jointly explore the use of more consistent admission terminology, to assist applicants and prospective students.

Recommendation 6

Postsecondary institutions should consider discussions jointly with other institutions to make their admission processes more alike.

Recommendation 7

Application and other deadlines should be published by BCCAT on the EducationPlanner.ca web site, as they once were.

D. Recommendations requiring **discussion among postsecondary institutions and stakeholders** in the secondary education field (Ministry of Education, school districts, BCCAT).

Recommendation 9

A comprehensive and collaborative review of admission requirements by some of the larger research universities is overdue. Incremental changes made over a number of years have resulted in a set of requirements that is inconsistent and makes little educational sense to secondary school educators. Admission requirements of these institutions have an effect on the school system that is disproportionate to the numbers of students that these institutions admit each year.

Recommendation 10

All postsecondary institutions should jointly review English requirements for applicants who have English as their primary language. The review should consider requirements for entry to the various programs and prerequisites for entry to the institutions' first year English courses and should include, in addition to secondary school course and grade minima, the need for further testing of English skills and the standards of achievement expected in such tests. This information should be available for public information on the EducationPlanner.ca site. The process of compiling and comparing this information could be effective in encouraging more consistency among postsecondary institutions.

Conclusion

Based on these findings, BCCAT might wish to encourage institutions to follow the recommendations contained in this report and to initiate discussions on admission policies. Developing a set of best practice admission guidelines would be worthwhile, since similar guidance has proved useful in the transfer policy and process arena.

Further research in 2009/10 should complement these efforts. In addition, a closer comparative examination of institutions' applicant and new student surveys would shed light more directly on applicant experiences and serve to highlight differences between institutions that could be of wide benefit. Comparisons with similar institutions in other jurisdictions would be especially helpful.

The current confusing state of entry requirements to standard first year degree program English courses suggests that this topic should also be examined more closely to determine the extent of the issue and to suggest remedies, if needed.

Introduction

In February 2008, the Admissions Committee of BCCAT determined the need to conduct an environmental scan on the possible need for system-wide work on institutional admissions processes and practices.

This involves a feasibility study to determine whether there is a perceived need and support for undertaking work on institutional admissions policies and practices or any overall systemic issues that might present a barrier to students entering or moving between institutions. The project involves revisiting the work done in the late 1990s and early 2000s by BCCAT's Task Force on Standards and Processes and later by its Admissions Committee.

Admission is interpreted broadly to include entry of school leavers to postsecondary institutions (the majority of admissions) and transfers of postsecondary students between institutions. Transfer students are those who follow prescribed tracks that lead from one institution to another within the same overall program, often a bachelor's degree program. No attention is paid in this report to graduate program admissions, nor is much attention given to other types of admission such as entry of mature students or of degree graduates to programs that do not require degrees for entry. Applicants from outside B.C., including international applicants, are mentioned only in passing.

Method

The research methodology involved the following:

- Interviews with selected members of BCCAT committees;
- Consultation with the B.C. Registrars' Association;
- Meeting with BCCAT Admissions Committee;
- Survey of secondary school counsellors;
- Survey of staff at postsecondary institutions;
- Review of institutional surveys of applicants and students, as available and
- Comparisons of results with earlier BCCAT studies.

Interviews with selected members of BCCAT Admissions Committee and Education Planner Advisory Committee
Individual telephone interviews were conducted with 6 committee members in order to learn what questions might be most pertinent for a survey.

Meeting with B.C. Registrars' Association (BCRA)
The registrars of B.C.'s public postsecondary institutions received a brief presentation on the purpose of the environmental scan on 23 October 2008. The group generally supported the notion of conducting a survey to explore relative satisfaction with the various admission processes faced by applicants. The contractor explained that he preferred for practical reasons to conduct indirect surveys of school counsellors and postsecondary staff rather than a direct survey of

applicants.

A number of suggestions were discussed that might facilitate a direct survey of a sample of applicants to B.C. institutions, but the logistics would be difficult, with respect to protection of privacy, duplication of requests, absence of sample bias and the need to use stale e-mail addresses in many cases.

Meeting with BCCAT Admissions Committee

The Admissions Committee met 7 November, 2008. Members were presented with two draft surveys, for secondary school counsellors and postsecondary staff respectively. Questions were raised and suggestions made for improvements to the proposed questions. Feedback was received until 12 November, 2008.

Survey of school counsellors

A web survey was launched on 18 November 2008. The group surveyed is referred to below as 'school counsellors', even though it consisted of a broader group (see Table 2). Counsellors were notified by means of a list-serve message to the B.C. School Counsellors Association's (BCSCA) list serve. A reminder was sent in the last 3 days of the survey.

Because many of those involved in the advising of secondary school students planning to go to a postsecondary institution are not members of BCSCA but are other school staff, such as educational assistants, a separate message was relayed to all interested secondary school and school district staff via the list serve of the B.C. Association of Principals and Vice Principals (BCPVP). A reminder notice was sent after the first week. The cooperation received from both of these groups was excellent. The survey ended on 4 December 2008.

Survey of postsecondary staff

A web survey was launched on 18 November 2008. Registrars were notified by means of a list-serve message to BCRA members requesting that they forward the message to those in their institutions, including those in academic units, who assist with the admission and advising of new students. BCRA cooperated fully in advertising this survey.

The group surveyed is referred to below as 'postsecondary staff'. It consisted of administrative, advising and instructional staff, i.e., faculty. (See Table 4 for details). The survey period ended on 4 December 2008.

Survey Results

Overall response

Overall responses to both surveys

Table 1

	Responded to all questions	Responded to some questions	Total responses
school counsellors	41	11	52
postsecondary staff	89	37	126

In neither case was there a fixed population to whom the surveys were sent, so it is not possible to calculate response rates. Responses from secondary school counsellors were fewer than anticipated, but more were received than anticipated from postsecondary staff.

Roles and locations of respondents

To be valid, these surveys must be representative of their populations.
The range of positions held by those responding to the surveys and their locations were as follows.

School Counsellor Question 1: My recent professional experience that relates to assisting students with entry to postsecondary institutions has been as a (select)

- Question 2: This experience was chiefly in (type of school).
- Question 3: This experience was chiefly in the geographic region (select).

Table 2

Professional experience	Public school	Independent school	Total	Total %
school counsellor	36	4	40	77%
career/resource adviser/assistant	5	0	5	10%
administrator	7	0	7	13%
total	48 (92%)	4 (8%)	52	100%

Table 3

Region	Total	Total %
Fraser Valley	3	6%
Greater Vancouver (Lower Mainland)	16	31%
Kootenays/Rockies	7	13%
Northern B.C.	6	12%
Sunshine Coast, Howe Sound	3	6%
Thompson/Okanagan/Cariboo	6	12%
Vancouver Island North, Central Coast	3	6%
Vancouver Island South	6	12%
Yukon	0	0%
Total	52	100%

Responses appear to be generally representative of schools, but probably under-represent students in major urban areas, where most large school are situated.

Postsecondary Survey Questions 1 & 2:
My recent professional experience that relates to assisting students with entry to postsecondary institutions has been as a (select).
This experience was chiefly in (name of postsecondary institution).

Table 4

Institution Type	Institution Name	adviser - program or academic	chair – dept, program, or school	administrator or registrar	admission officer or recruiter	career/ resource adviser/ counsellor	financial aid adviser	other	total responses
College	Camosun College	4							4
	College of New Caledonia	1				2			3
	College of the Rockies	3			1		1		5
	Douglas College	2		2	1				5
	Langara College	5	7	1	2	1		2	18
	North Island College	3		2	1	1	1		8
	Northern Lights College			1	1				2
	Northwest Community College			1	1		2		4
	Okanagan College								0
	Selkirk College		1	1					2
	Vancouver Community College	2				1			3
	Yukon College								0
Sub total		20	8	8	7	5	4	2	54 (43%)
Institute	British Columbia Institute of Technology	3		2	2				7
	Justice Institute of B. C.								0
	Nicola Valley Institute of Technology								0
Sub total		3	0	2	2	0	0	0	7 (6%)
Research University	Simon Fraser University			1					1
	University of B. C. - Vancouver			1	4				5
	University of B. C. - Okanagan	1							1
	University of Northern B. C.	4						1	5
	University of Victoria							1	1
Sub total		5	0	2	4	0	0	2	13 (10%)
Special Purpose Teaching University	Capilano University	1		1	3				5
	Emily Carr University of Art & Design			3	1				4
	Kwantlen Polytechnic University	3							3
	Royal Roads University				1				1
	Thompson Rivers University	1		1			1		3
	Thompson Rivers University – Open Learning	5		2				1	8
	University of the Fraser Valley	7	2	1	1	2			13
	Vancouver Island University	6				2			8
Sub total		23	2	8	7	4	1	1	45 (36%)
Other	Trinity Western University	1		1				1	3
	not specified			3		1			4
Sub total		1	0	4	0	1	0	1	7 (6%)
Grand total		52 (41%)	10 (8%)	24 (19%)	19 (15%)	10 (8%)	5 (4%)	6 (5%)	126 (100%)

Respondents came from a wide variety of institutions and roles within those institutions. Almost all B.C. public institutions were represented in the survey, but the distribution of responses was not proportional to each institution's size. For instance, there were 18 responses from Langara College but only one response from the University of Victoria, a larger institution. It should also be noted that a minority of responses (34%) were from the units normally most closely associated with admission issues, namely 'admissions officer or recruiter' and 'administrator or registrar'. However, this functional breakdown is not well-defined: in some institutions, departmental units play major roles in admitting new students.

No strong claim of validity is supportable. The school counsellor survey heard from about 10% of schools and advising/counselling staff. The postsecondary survey is somewhat more representative. In both cases, caution should be used in the drawing of conclusions. The strongest bias is likely the under-representation of research universities in the postsecondary staff survey and the small population sizes of the 'institute' and 'other' groups.

Range of postsecondary students handled by respondents

On each survey, respondents were asked what postsecondary program types were represented by the students they had assisted.

School Counsellor Survey & Postsecondary Survey Q4/Q3
Students for whom I am responsible sought entry to what type(s) of postsecondary program(s)? (Please select all that apply.)

- *trades / vocational*
- *upgrading or adult basic education*
- *general academic (whether planning to transfer later or not)*
- *technical & professional (e.g. Nursing, Engineering)*
- *programs that select on assessed skills (e.g. art, dance, music performance)*
- *other, please specify*

Most school counsellors reported that they had worked with students taking a full range of postsecondary programs. The least frequent program type represented is upgrading or ABE - 57% of counsellors had dealt with these.

As expected, postsecondary staff are more specialized with respect to program type, i.e., whereas school counsellors deal with students who have interests in a wide variety of program types, postsecondary staff are likely to work with a limited range of program types, so that an admission assistant for a Nursing program would not normally assist students seeking aircraft mechanic or forest resources programs.

Both surveys appear to be reasonably representative of the range of postsecondary programs sought by applicants.

Information quality

Web sites

School counsellors, applicants and their families depend on reliable and clear information to effectively make or assist with educational transitions. Increasingly, they are encouraged to seek necessary information on the web sites of institutions. The following question concerns the quality of those sources as judged by school counsellors and postsecondary staff.

School Counsellor Survey Question 5:
What do you think about the information that institutions display on their web sites for prospective students and others?

- *It is easy to access and find information.*
- *It is timely and up-to-date.*
- *For the average student, it is easy to understand.*
- *Navigating their various sites is similar and predictable.*
- *It is better than printed material.*
- *Students prefer on-line information.*

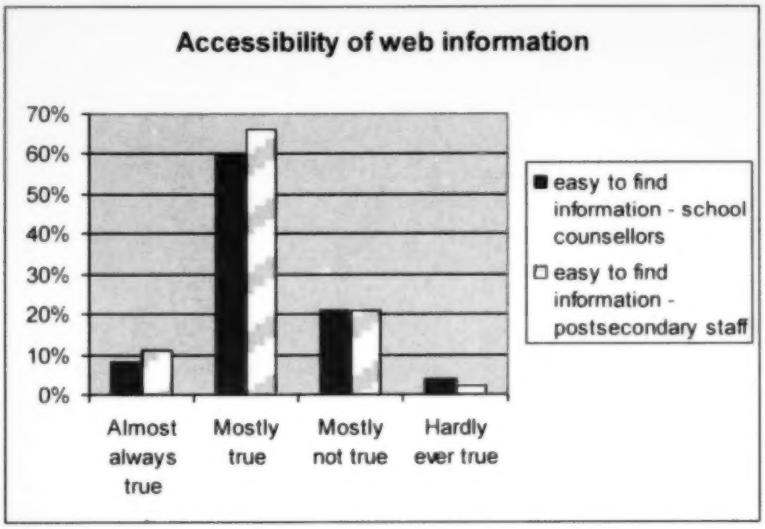
Postsecondary Survey Question 4:
How would you rate the information that your institution displays on its web site for prospective students and others?

- *It is easy to access and find information.*
- *It is timely and up-to-date.*
- *For the average student, it is easy to understand.*
- *Navigating our various pages is similar and predictable.*
- *It is better than our printed material.*
- *Students prefer on-line information.*

Table 5

		Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true
easy to find information	school counsellors	8%	60%	21%	4%
	postsecondary staff	11%	66%	21%	2%
timely and up-to-date	school counsellors	29%	67%	2%	2%
	postsecondary staff	22%	60%	17%	0%
easy to understand	school counsellors	0%	44%	50%	2%
	postsecondary staff	8%	64%	20%	5%
navigating is similar and predictable	school counsellors	0%	33%	35%	29%
	postsecondary staff	17%	60%	19%	3%
better than printed material	school counsellors	8%	52%	29%	8%
	postsecondary staff	24%	38%	21%	5%
students prefer on-line information	school counsellors	19%	52%	19%	0%
	postsecondary staff	30%	41%	15%	3%

Figure 1



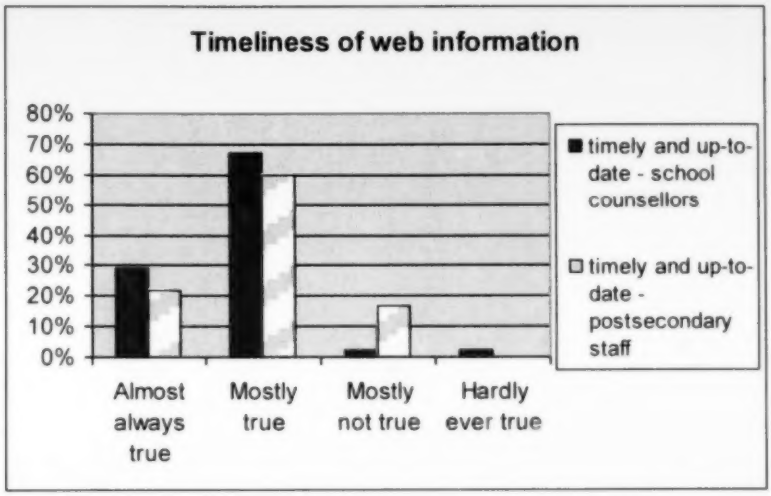
Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.

Table 6

	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true")
easy to find information	college	2.3
	institute	2.2
	research univ	2.0
	SP teaching univ	2.1
	other	1.5
	all	2.2

There is broad agreement that it is usually easy to find information, with occasional exceptions. Table 6 suggests that postsecondary staff at colleges (mean score 2.3) are slightly less likely to agree with this statement than those in other types of postsecondary institution (overall mean score 2.2). Conversely, staff at research universities (mean score 2.0) are somewhat more likely to agree that information is easy to find on their web sites. The difference between college staff responses and research university staff responses is significant.

Figure 2



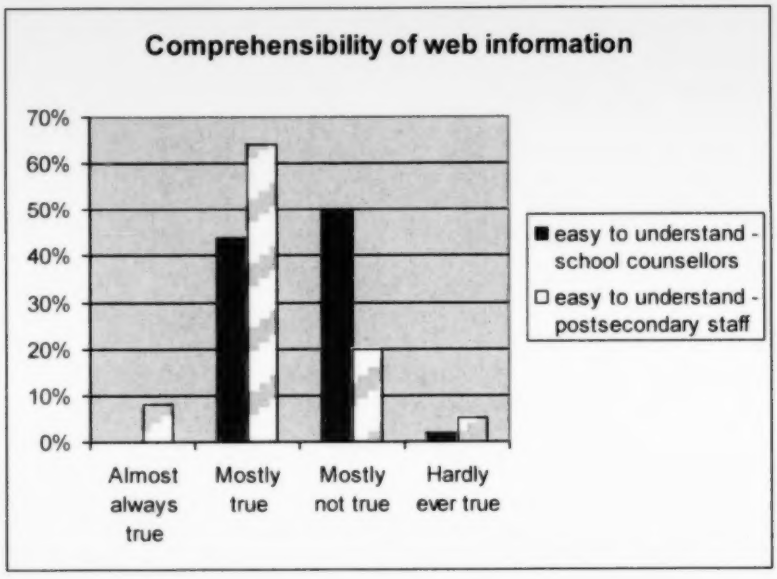
Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.

Table 7

	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true")
Timely and up-to-date	college	2.2
	institute	1.8
	research univ	2.1
	SP teaching univ	1.8
	other	1.7
	all	2.0

Interestingly, postsecondary staff are less confident than school counsellors that their information is timely. Presumably, they become aware of changes early in the process and can see how long those changes take to appear on their web sites.

Figure 3



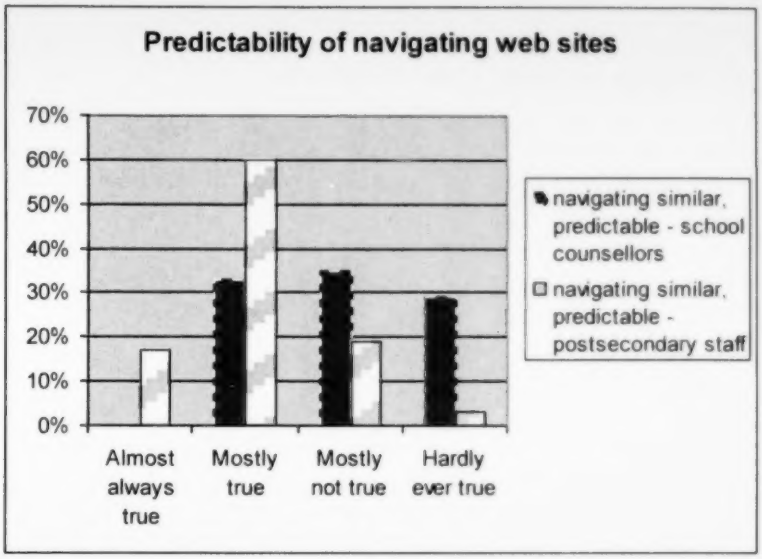
Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.

Table 8

	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true")
easy to understand	college	2.5
	institute	2.0
	research univ	2.1
	SP teaching univ	2.1
	other	1.8
	all	2.2

The biggest problem and the greatest divergence of opinion between the two groups arises over the comprehensibility of the information. More than half of the school counsellors think that it is hard for the average student to understand the information. Among the postsecondary groups, the college staff are less inclined than the other groups to think that the information is easily understood by students.

Figure 4



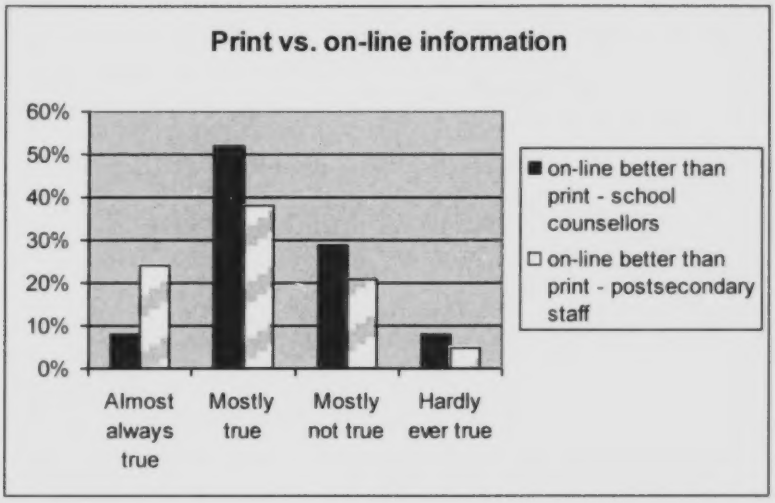
Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.

Table 9

	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true")
navigating is similar and predictable	college	2.3
	institute	2.2
	research univ	2.0
	SP teaching univ	1.9
	other	1.6
	all	2.1

School counsellors, who must deal with a wide variety of web sites, report that navigation is often difficult and inconsistent. The responses of postsecondary staff to their own home institution's web site are significantly more positive than those of school counsellors, but it is likely that familiarity is a major factor: most postsecondary staff probably visit external institution sites less frequently than school counsellors.

Figure 5



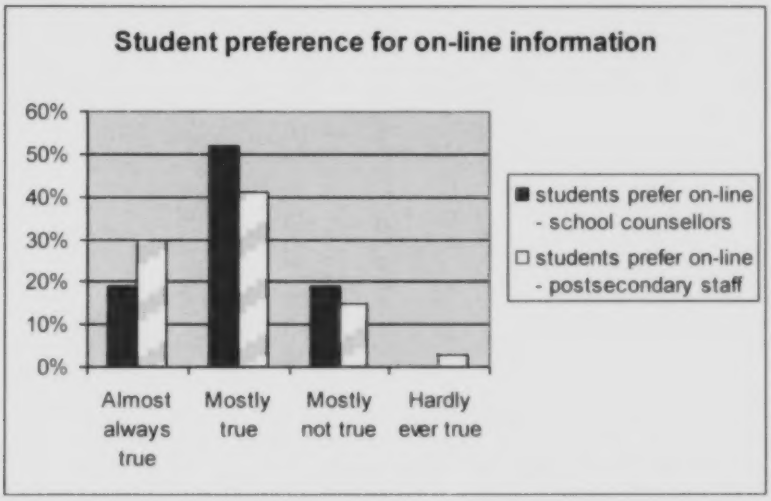
Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.

Table 10

	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true")
better than printed material.	college	2.3
	institute	1.4
	research univ	2.4
	SP teaching univ	2.1
	other	1.4
	all	2.1

Opinion is mixed on whether on-line information is better than printed information. Print seems to have some strong defenders. Within the postsecondary groups, respondents from institutes are far more positive about on-line information than are respondents from colleges or research universities.

Figure 6



Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.

Table 11

	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true")
students prefer on-line information	college	2.1
	institute	2.2
	research univ	1.7
	SP teaching univ	1.8
	other	1.3
	all	1.9

The perception of most school counsellors and post-secondary staff is that most students prefer on-line information.

Potentially misleading information sources and gaps

School counsellors and postsecondary staff likely have learned to trust certain information sources. Generally, these will be sources that are the most commonly used. Occasionally, it becomes apparent that there are other sources of information that are less reliable, but are nevertheless accessed by students and their parents, who are in weaker positions to judge their accuracy. The survey asked if any such unreliable sources could be identified. These sources might be maintained by institutions or by other agencies.

An information gap could exist if there were important information that was not available freely. For example at one time, it was difficult to learn the admitting averages for the previous year at certain institutions.

School Counsellor Survey Question 6
Are you aware of any information sources that are unhelpful, confusing or inaccurate relating to students seeking postsecondary admission?

- *If yes, please describe.*

Postsecondary Survey Question 5
Are you aware of any information sources that are unhelpful, confusing or inaccurate, relating to transfer or direct entry students (i.e. Grade 12 students) seeking admission?

- *If yes, please describe.*

School Counsellor Survey Question 7 & Postsecondary Survey Question 6
Can you identify any information gaps that, if filled, would make admission easier for students?

- *If yes, please describe.*

Table 12

Inaccurate etc	School counsellors (full text in Appendix 1)
7 comments	web site content and navigation
2 comments	awkward, slow to first set up account before applying
1 comment	lack of email contact addresses
1 comment	differences in processes confuse applicants
1 comment	requirements for transfer unclear
1 comment	Education Planner information outdated
1 comment	university to university transfer credit lacking
1 comment	out of Province transfer information lacking
1 comment	inconsistent terminology
1 comment	slow information retrieval compared with written material
1 comment	lack of cost information
1 comment	verbal information is least reliable
1 comment	course prerequisites not obvious
1 comment	career sites vague

Table 13

Inaccurate etc	Postsecondary staff (full text in Appendix 1)
3 comments	web site content and navigation
2 comment	college – college, university – university transfer credit lacking
2 comment	out of date material
2 comments	BCCAT site too technical, confusing
2 comments	transferring to/from BCIT
1 comment	Education Planner lacking re graduate programs, needs change to search tool
1 comment	lack of standard course numbering system
1 comment	changes in course numbers
1 comment	web information might not match printed information
1 comment	ABE handbook
1 comment	on-line registration difficult
1 comment	confusion over Provincial exams
1 comment	use of jargon, 'small print'
1 comment	U of Victoria has different credit units
1 comment	unclear policies on upgrading and Adult Graduation
1 comment	calendars updated only annually

A majority (57%) of school counsellors but only a fairly small proportion (27%) of postsecondary respondents believe that there are some unhelpful, confusing or inaccurate information sources. They mention several issues, mostly relating to web site structure and the need for would-be applicants to have prior in-depth

knowledge of the institution's structure to find what they seek.

A number of postsecondary staff appear to assume that BCCAT is not involved in the admission of secondary students to postsecondary institutions.

E.g. *"I wouldn't think that Grade 12 students would use BCCAT when they would more like just apply to the institution of choice. For equivalency to Gr 12 for adults seeking transfer was also not a function of BCCAT that I was aware of".*

This respondent appears to be unaware of the broader role of BCCAT and may not be familiar with the many activities of the Council beyond the coordination and publication of the BC Transfer Guide, such as the operation of the Education Planner web site.

Tables 14 and 15 refer to the question on gaps in information.

Table 14

Gaps School counsellors (full text in Appendix 1)	
3 comments	course prerequisites not obvious
2 comments	use comparative charts
2 comments	assume less prior knowledge
2 comments	web site content and navigation
1 comment	lack of email contact addresses
1 comment	requirements for transfer unclear
1 comment	inconsistent terminology
1 comment	need letter to acknowledge application
1 comment	impacts of different graduation paths
1 comment	cut-off averages for transfer
1 comment	history of program cut-off averages
1 comment	web site index like calendar index
1 comment	list admission requirements with program description
1 comment	requirements too diverse & confusing
1 comment	faster response to applicant

Table 15

Gaps Postsecondary staff (full text in Appendix 1)	
5 comments	college – college, university – university transfer credit lacking
3 comments	update Education Planner, other sites
3 comments	add more BCIT information in Transfer Guide
2 comments	clearer presentation of information
2 comments	Provincial exams
1 comment	add upper level course to BC Transfer Guide and Athabasca
1 comment	poor internal communications / out of date material
1 comment	course equivalencies from secondary school
1 comment	simplify English competency requirements
1 comment	better to put admission information in one place, not under each program
1 comment	add admission information to web site
1 comment	clearer portfolio information
1 comment	direct link for international applicants
1 comment	better explanation of transfer
1 comment	where to look if not found on BCCAT site
1 comment	faster response to transfer assessment request
1 comment	define university transferable course
1 comment	information on transfer from outside BC
1 comment	encourage transfer applicant on web site
1 comment	use clearer terms

About half of school counsellors (49%) and a little fewer than half of postsecondary respondents (44%) consider that there are gaps in the available information. While those gaps vary, several relate to the need for clearer presentation of information (e.g. placing admission information for a program next to the program description), format (e.g. matrix form) and Grade 12 course prerequisites for postsecondary courses. 'Lateral' transfer credit between institutions (college to college, university to college etc) is mentioned by several respondents. Issues about provincial exams and which courses are examinable are also frequently mentioned gaps. See Appendix 1 for verbatim comments.

Recommendation 1
When postsecondary institutions review and revise their web sites, close attention should be given to making the information readily understandable to an average prospective student. Navigational consistency is also desirable. Where industry norms or standards exist, these should be followed.

Recommendation 2
Given current heavy dependency on on-line information, each institution needs to pay close attention to the presentation of admission information on its web site. Attention also is needed to ensure that appropriate updating of information occurs.

Recommendation 3
The postsecondary institutions together with BCCAT should investigate the feasibility of expanding the scope of the BC Transfer Guide to include a broader range of course and program equivalencies, taking into consideration the benefits and costs involved.

Terminology

If different postsecondary institutions use different terminology for the same process or event, it can be confusing to those who deal with multiple institutions i.e. school counsellors and applicants. Examples might be terms like "matriculated", "confirmed enrolment", "early admission", "registered" and "wait-listed." Each institution might mean something subtly or radically different when using these terms.

School Counsellor Survey Question 8
What do you think of the terminology used, the admission processes and the admission requirements of the institutions?

- *The terminology they use is similar and easy to understand.*
- *Use of more standard terminology would be desirable.*

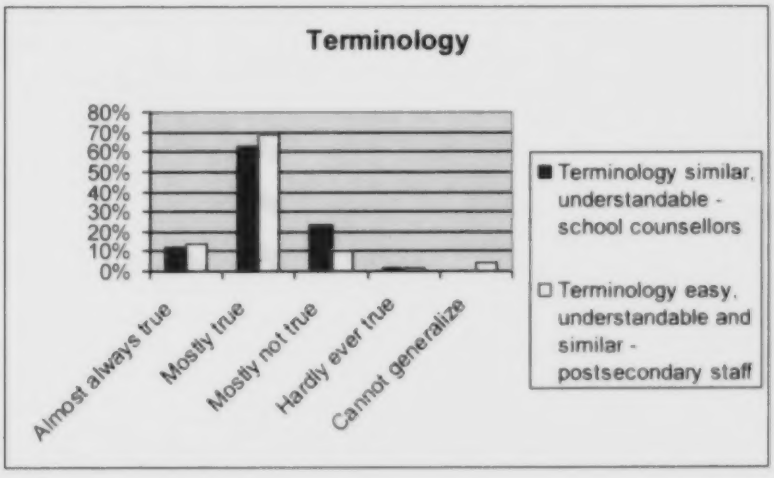
Postsecondary Survey Question 7
What do you think of the terminology used and the admission processes at your institution?

- *The terminology we use is easy to understand is similar to that used by other institutions.*

Table 16

		Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize
Terminology similar, understandable.	school counsellors	12%	63%	23%	2%	0%
	postsecondary staff	14%	69%	10%	2%	4%
Use of more standard terminology would be desirable	school counsellors	48%	31%	14%	7%	0%

Figure 7

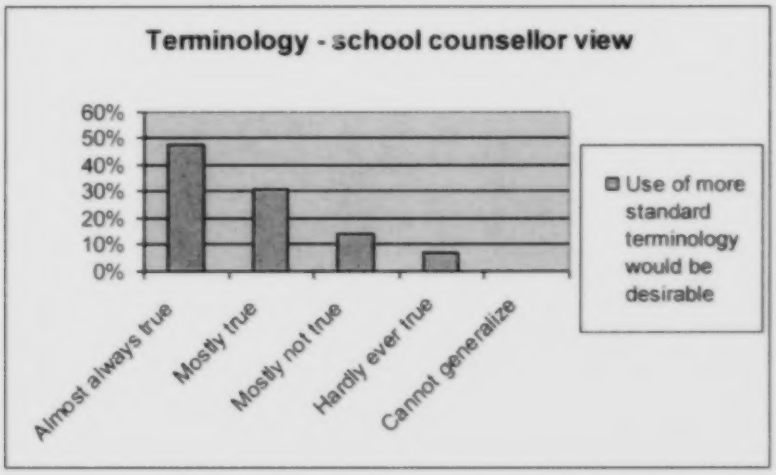


Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.
Table 17

	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true"
Terminology is easy to understand, similar,	college	2.1
	institute	2.0
	research univ	2.0
	SP teaching univ	2.0
	other	1.5
	all	2.0

Terminology used by postsecondary institutions seems reasonably clear and consistent. Secondary school staff and postsecondary staff are largely in agreement about this.

Figure 8



School counsellors, however, believe that use of more standard terminology is desirable, suggesting that there is still room for improvement (postsecondary staff were not asked this question). This might be a topic that postsecondary institutions would choose to discuss among themselves and possibly agree on a common lexicon.

Recommendation 4
Postsecondary institutions should jointly explore the use of more consistent admission–related terminology, to assist applicants and prospective students.

Responsiveness of postsecondary institutions

Institutions receive thousands of inquiries from applicants or would-be applicants and many staff positions are devoted to vital customer service functions. The immediate objective is to provide a quick, clear and accurate response, while treating the inquirer with respect. The ultimate goal is to create a long-term positive relationship between the inquirer and the institution. If applicants are poorly served, they will tend to avoid an institution by attending elsewhere or perhaps not attending at all. Each survey asks similar questions, but in different contexts.

School counsellor Survey Question 13
How do the postsecondary institutions in general respond when Gr.11 or 12 students have questions?

- *they respond quickly and accurately to*
  - *telephone inquiries.*
  - *e-mail inquiries.*
  - *in-person inquiries.*
  - *written inquiries that accompany applicants' documents or application materials.*
- *they have hours of business that make it easy for applicants to communicate with them.*
- *they treat everyone respectfully, as valued individuals.*

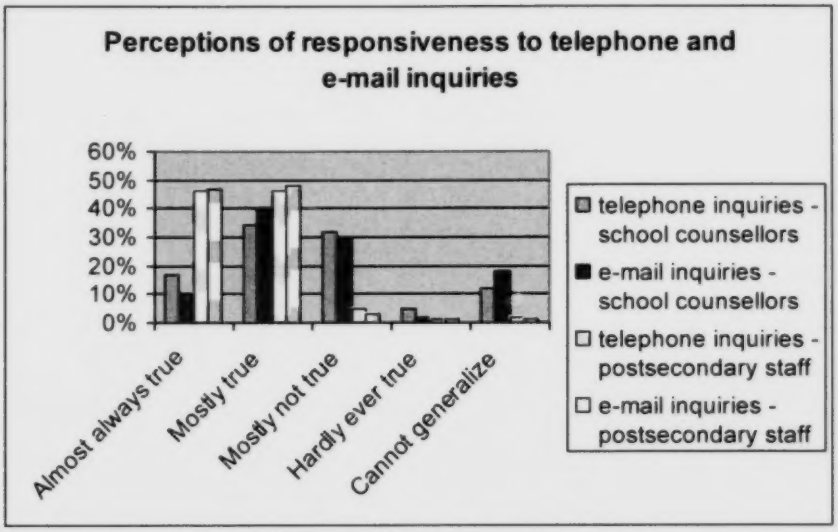
Postsecondary Survey Question 8
How does your institution respond when applicants have questions?

- *we respond quickly and accurately to*
  - *telephone inquiries.*
  - *e-mail inquiries.*
  - *in-person inquiries.*
  - *written inquiries that accompany applicants' documents or application materials.*
- *we have hours of business that make it easy for applicants to communicate with us*
- *we respond in the same way to transfer applicants as we do to applicants from Grade 12.*
- *we treat everyone respectfully, as valued individuals.*

Table 18

			Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize
respond quickly and accurately to	telephone inquiries	school counsellors	17%	34%	32%	5%	12%
		postsecondary staff	45%	48%	6%	0%	1%
	e-mail inquiries	school counsellors	10%	40%	30%	2%	18%
		postsecondary staff	48%	48%	3%	0%	1%
	in-person inquiries.	school counsellors	20%	24%	12%	5%	39%
		postsecondary staff	62%	35%	1%	1%	1%
	written inquiries	school counsellors	12%	25%	15%	2%	45%
		postsecondary staff	21%	62%	6%	0%	12%

Figure 9



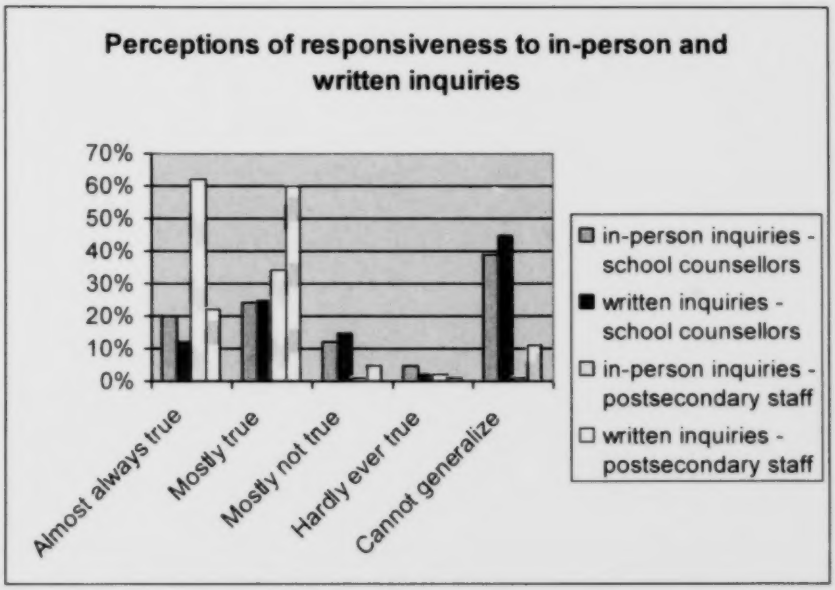
Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.

Table 19

	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true")
respond quickly and accurately to telephone inquiries	college	1.5
	institute	1.9
	research univ	1.6
	SP teaching univ	1.6
	other	1.8
	all	1.6
respond quickly and accurately to e-mail inquiries	college	1.5
	institute	1.9
	research univ	1.4
	SP teaching univ	1.6
	other	1.8
	all	1.6

School counsellors are much less confident that responses will be quick than are postsecondary staff. It is possible that postsecondary staff are less aware of response times to general inquiries, but are accurately reporting response times to more focussed inquiries in their own units.

Figure 10



Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.

Table 20

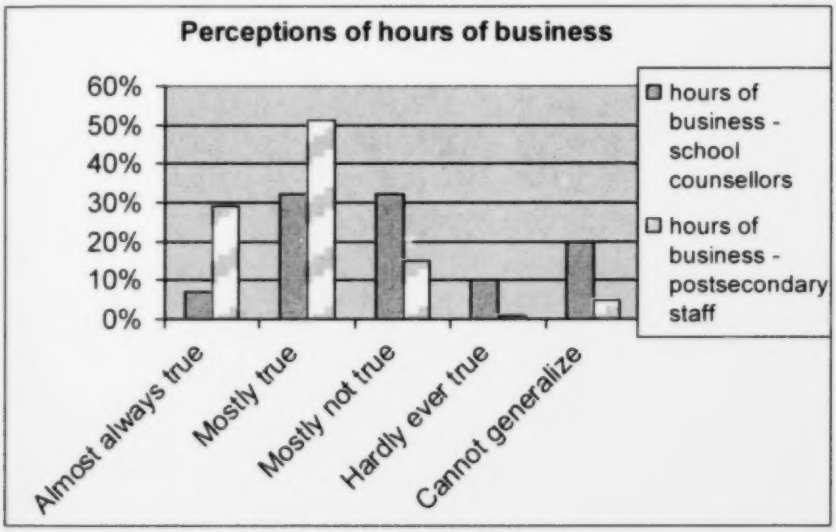
	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true")
respond quickly and accurately to in-person inquiries	college	1.4
	institute	1.3
	research univ	1.2
	SP teaching univ	1.5
	other	1.8
	all	1.4
respond quickly and accurately to written inquiries	college	1.7
	institute	2.1
	research univ	1.9
	SP teaching univ	1.9
	other	2.0
	all	1.8

Many school counsellors do not give definite answers. Of those answering, they do not share the view of postsecondary staff that responses are swift. Overall, there is a significant divergence of perception between school counsellors and postsecondary staff about how promptly and how well institutions respond to questions.

Table 21

		Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize
hours of business make it easy to communicate	school counsellors	7%	32%	32%	10%	20%
	postsecondary staff	29%	51%	15%	1%	5%
respond the same to transfers as to Gr 12s	postsecondary staff	44%	36%	8%	1%	10%
treat everyone respectfully	school counsellors	22%	39%	15%	5%	20%
	postsecondary staff	70%	28%	1%	0%	1%

Figure 11



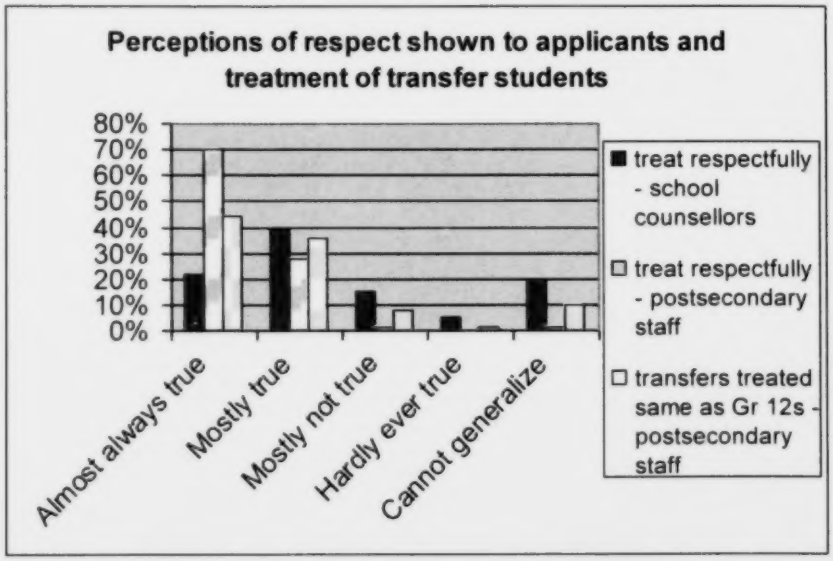
Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.

Table 22

	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true")
hours of business make it easy to communicate	college	1.8
	institute	1.9
	research univ	2.1
	SP teaching univ	2.1
	other	1.8
	all	1.9

Once again, school counsellors and postsecondary staff do not see eye-to-eye. School counsellors' perceptions are evenly split on whether the hours of business make it easy for secondary school students to communicate with the postsecondary institutions.

Figure 12



Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.

Table 23

	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true")
treat everyone respectfully	college	1.3
	institute	1.3
	research univ	1.5
	SP teaching univ	1.3
	other	1.5
	all	1.3
respond the same to transfers as to Gr 12s	college	1.6
	institute	1.6
	research univ	2.1
	SP teaching univ	1.6
	other	1.5
	all	1.6

School counsellors have a significantly lower opinion of the respect shown to applicants by postsecondary institutions. The reasons for this are not known, but in the case of postsecondary staff, they might be unaware of attitudinal problems in other departments or in other institutions and might also be reluctant to be over-critical of their own units. It should be of some concern to postsecondary institutions that school counsellors' opinions vary considerably from their own.

Recommendation 5

Postsecondary institutions should regularly discuss matters of common interest with school counsellors and other school personnel in their regions to enhance communication and to establish whether the differences in perception shown in this report are based on issues of significance.

Consistency of admission processes

One sometimes hears that institutions have such different processes for admitting students that applicants are easily confused and that counselling staff at secondary schools are faced with a vast array of conflicting procedures.

School Counsellor Survey Question 8
What do you think of the terminology used, the admission processes and the admission requirements of the institutions?

- *The admission processes they use are similar.*
- *More similar admission processes would be desirable.*

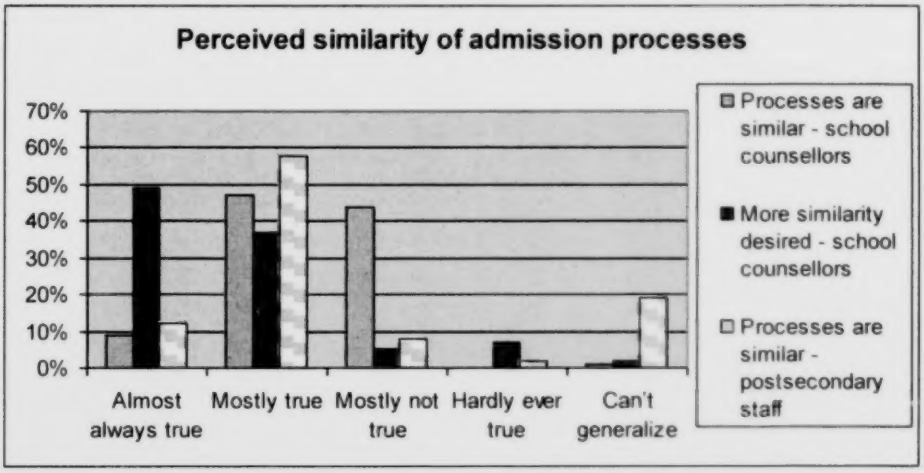
Postsecondary Survey Question 7
What do you think of the terminology used and the admission processes at your institution?

- *The admission processes we use are similar to those used by other comparable institutions.*

Table 24

		Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize
processes are similar	school counsellors	9%	47%	44%	0%	1%
processes are similar to those at comparable institutions	postsecondary staff	12%	58%	8%	2%	19%
more similarity is desirable	school counsellors	49%	37%	5%	7%	2%

Figure 13



Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.
Table 25

	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true")
processes are similar	college	2.0
	institute	2.3
	research univ	1.9
	SP teaching univ	2.0
	other	2.0
	all	2.0

School counsellors did not think admission processes were as similar to each other as did the postsecondary staff. They definitely prefer processes that are more alike.

Recommendation 6
Postsecondary institutions should consider discussions jointly with other institutions to make their admission processes more alike.

Timing of admission processes

Information, distribution and application phases of the admission cycle

In some provinces of Canada, and all across the USA, the admission cycle starts earlier than is common practice in British Columbia, whether this is in the student's final school year or in their penultimate year. For example, most institutions in Ontario expect that applications for Fall entry will be submitted by mid-December of the previous year. In B.C., applications for Fall entry are not normally required until late February of the same year, i.e. about 2–3 months later than many other jurisdictions.

School Counsellor Survey Question 9

What do you think about the timing of the admission process for current Grade 12 students who are planning to attend postsecondary institutions?

- *School visits occur and information is distributed at the right time of year.*
- *Applications are accepted at the right time of year.*

Postsecondary Survey Question 10

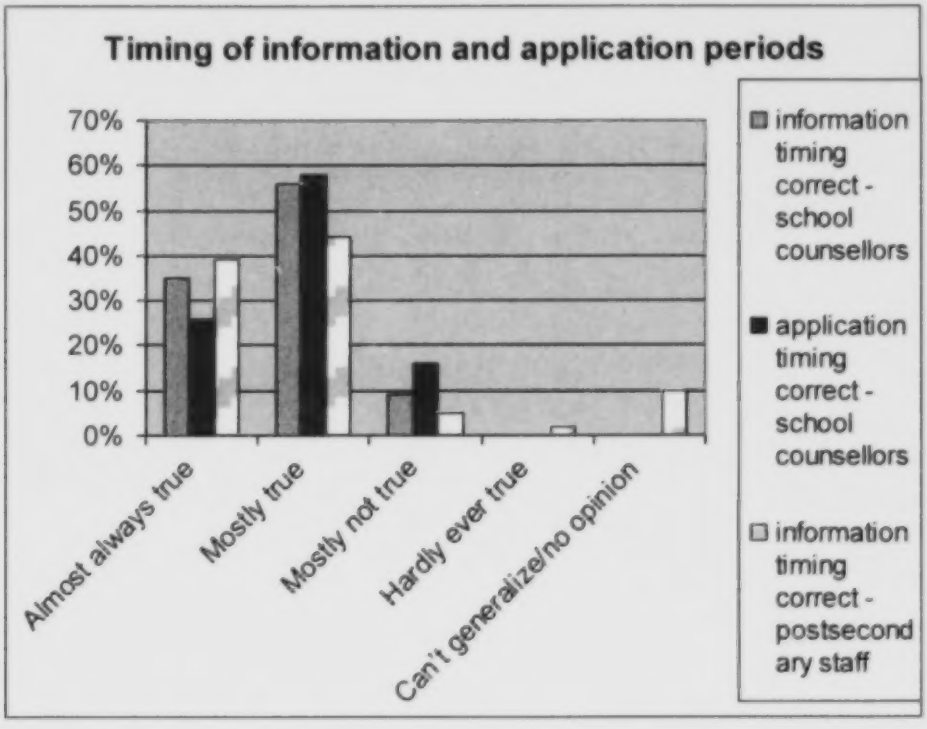
What do you think about the timing of the admission process for current Grade 12 students who are planning to attend your institution?

- *School visits occur and our information is distributed at the right time of year.*

Table 26

		Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize/ no opinion
Information distributed, visits made at right time	school counsellors	35%	56%	9%	0%	0%
	postsecondary staff	39%	44%	5%	2%	10%
Applications accepted at right time	school counsellors	26%	58%	16%	0%	0%

Figure 14



Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.

Table 27

	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true")
Information distributed, visits made at right time	college	1.7
	institute	1.7
	research univ	1.3
	SP teaching univ	1.7
	other	1.8
	all	1.7

This shows broad agreement that the visit and information distribution cycles occur at the right time and that the application period is timed correctly, on the whole. However, 16% of school counsellors thought that the application period was not correct. Presumably, they would prefer it to be earlier in the cycle, although that is not clear from the question or from their responses.

To achieve more similarity of application dates small realignments might be helpful – e.g. Emily Carr University' s Fall early application deadline is 31 January, but many other institutions set 28 February as the last date to accept Grade 12 early admits.

Research universities, among the postsecondary institutions, seem to be most in favour of the current visit and information distribution dates.

Offer phase of the admission cycle

School Counsellor Survey Question 9

What do you think about the timing of the admission process for current Grade 12 students who are planning to attend postsecondary institutions?

- *Offers are made at the right time of year and this timing is consistent with offers received from other provinces*
- *Institutions show leniency when applicants miss deadlines or misunderstand instructions.*

Postsecondary Survey Question 10

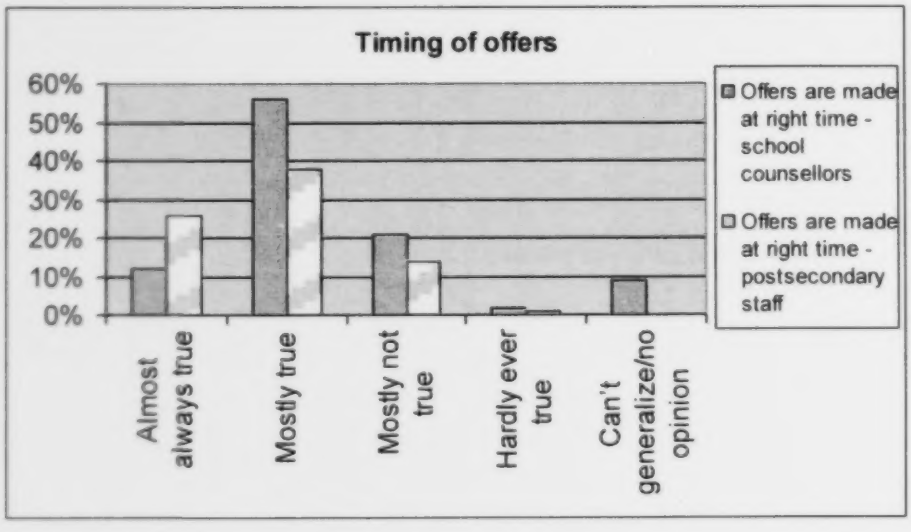
What do you think about the timing of the admission process for current Grade 12 students who are planning to attend your institution?

- *Our offers are made at the right time of year and this timing is consistent with institutions in other provinces.*
- *My institution shows leniency when applicants miss deadlines or misunderstand instructions.*

Table 28

		Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize/ no opinion
Offers are made at right time	school counsellors	12%	56%	21%	2%	9%
	postsecondary staff	26%	38%	14%	1%	22%

Figure 15



Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.

Table 29

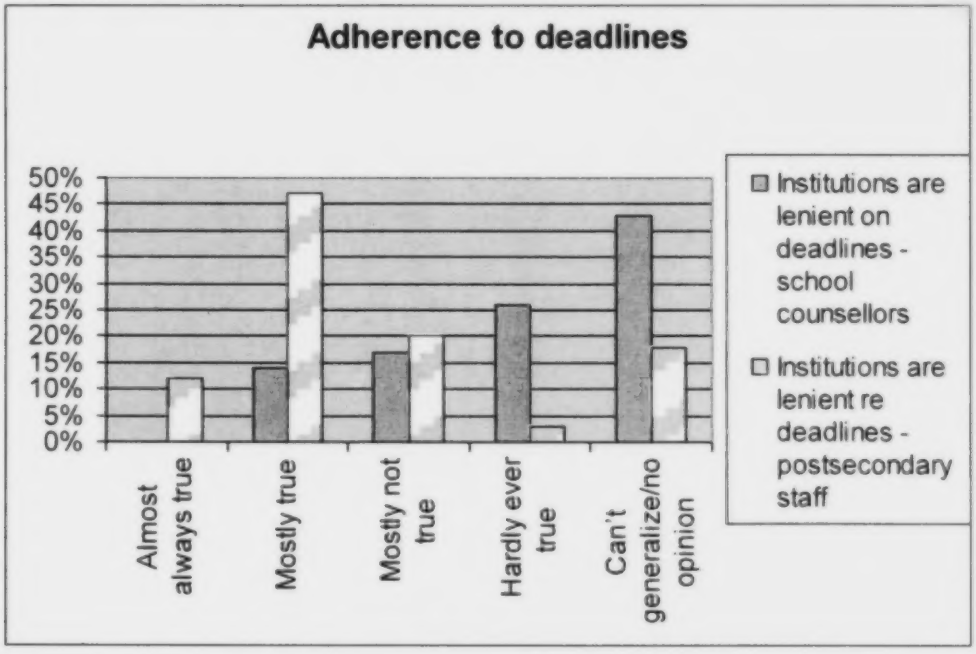
	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true"
Offers are made at right time	college	2.0
	institute	2.3
	research univ	1.6
	SP teaching univ	1.8
	other	1.8
	all	1.9

This comparison shows fairly high satisfaction with the timing of admission offers to secondary school leavers. Presumably, earlier offers would be preferred by some. Among the postsecondary respondents, those from institutes are less positive about the timing of their offers than those from other groups.

Table 30

		Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize/ no opinion
Institutions are lenient on deadlines	school counsellors	0%	14%	17%	26%	43%
	postsecondary staff	12%	47%	20%	3%	18%

Figure 16



Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.

Table 31

	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true"
Institutions are lenient on deadlines	college	2.2
	institute	2.2
	research univ	2.6
	SP teaching univ	2.2
	other	1.3
	all	2.2

Many school counsellors are reluctant to be specific, most likely because the practices of postsecondary institutions vary widely. Generally, the postsecondary staff appear to have a more positive view of the applicant's world than do the school counsellors. They might be relating to deadlines that are internal to the organization and those deadlines might be somewhat flexible. Many applicants face more rigid deadlines, such as when selection processes have begun or if course registration is imminent. In addition, postsecondary staff appear to be somewhat split in their responses, indicating different practices by research universities from most other groups

Timing – transfer admissions

Transfer applicants might apply for admission at roughly the same time as secondary school leavers, but when they will receive offers of admission is less predictable.

Postsecondary Survey Question 13

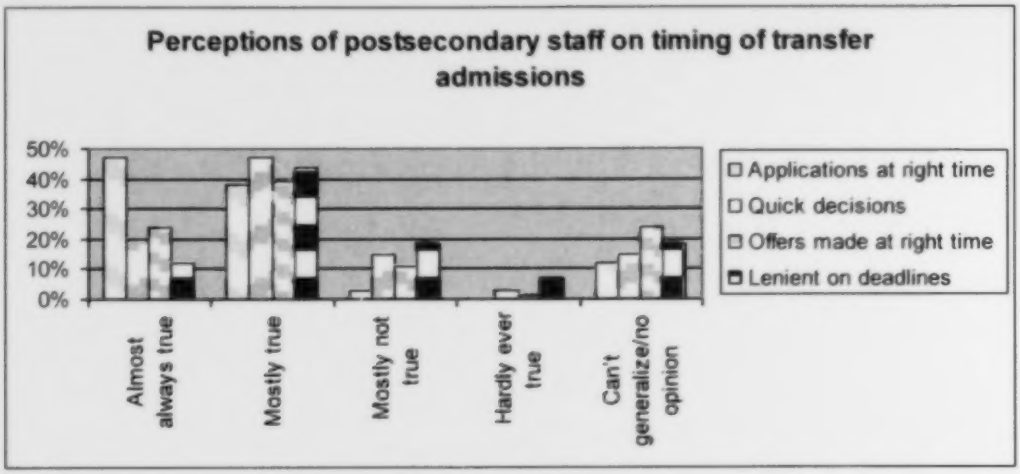
What do you think about the timing of the admission process for transfer students who are planning to attend your institution?

- *We accept applications at the right time of year.*
- *My institution makes admission decisions quickly, allowing students plenty of lead time.*
- *Our offers are made at the right time of year and timing is consistent with institutions in other provinces.*
- *My institution shows leniency when applicants miss deadlines or misunderstand instructions.*

Table 32

	Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize/no opinion
Applications accepted at right time	47%	38%	3%	0%	12%
Quick decision made	20%	47%	15%	3%	15%
Offers are made at right time	24%	39%	11%	1%	24%
Institutions are lenient re deadlines	12%	44%	18%	7%	18%

Figure 17



Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.

Table 33

	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true")
Applications accepted at right time	college	1.4
	institute	1.8
	research univ	1.5
	SP teaching univ	1.5
	other	1.5
	all	1.5
My institution makes quick admission decisions	college	1.9
	institute	2.8
	research univ	2.4
	SP teaching univ	2.0
	other	1.5
	all	2.0
Offers are made at right time	college	1.8
	institute	2.6
	research univ	2.0
	SP teaching univ	1.8
	other	1.5
	all	1.9
My institution is lenient on deadlines	college	2.2
	institute	2.8
	research univ	2.4
	SP teaching univ	2.2
	other	1.5
	all	2.2

Postsecondary staff appear to be satisfied that transfer admissions are timed suitably, but there is variability by group of institution. Institutes appear to be less likely to give quick decisions, make offers at the right time or show leniency on deadlines.

Payment of deposits

Admission deposits are required by many institutions in an attempt to firm up their projections of the new intake. Deposits of $200 or more are typical. They might be required within a few weeks of receiving an offer and up to six months before classes start.

School Counsellor Survey Question 9
What do you think about the timing of the admission process for current Grade 12 students who are planning to attend postsecondary institutions?

- *Students are not forced to pay deposits too early or before they have received all offers.*
- *Institutions readily return deposits to students who receive better offers from other institutions.*

Postsecondary Survey Question 10
What do you think about the timing of the admission process for current Grade 12 students who are planning to attend your institution?

- *We do not force applicants to pay a deposit too early, before they have received all their offers.*

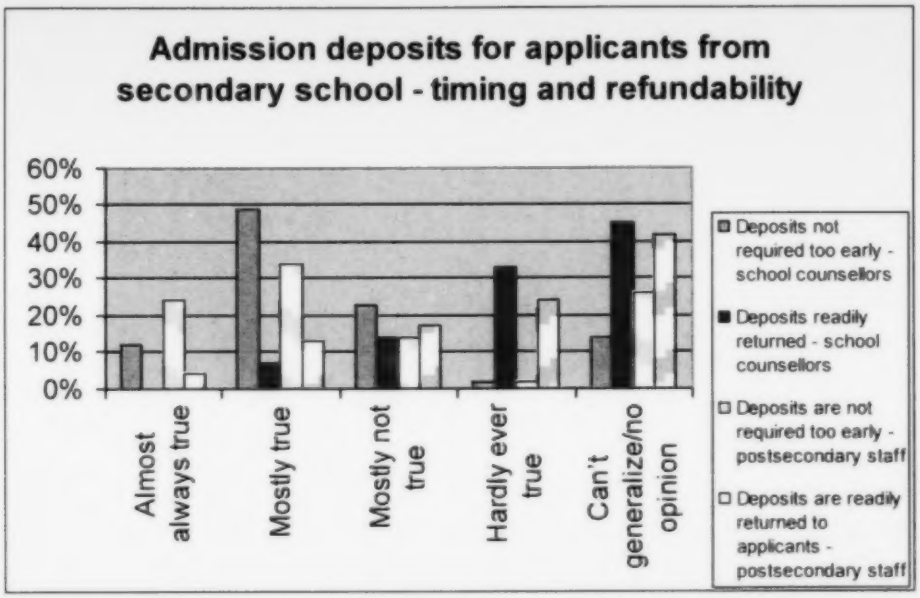
Postsecondary Survey Question 13
What do you think about the timing of the admission process for transfer students who are planning to attend your institution?

- *We do not force applicants to pay deposits too early or before they have received all offers.*
- *My institution readily returns deposits to students who receive better offers from other institutions.*

Table 34

			Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize /no opinion
Deposits are not required too early	Admissions from secondary school	school counsellors	12%	49%	23%	2%	14%
		postsecondary staff	24%	34%	14%	2%	26%
Deposits are readily returned to applicants		school counsellors	0%	7%	14%	33%	45%
		postsecondary staff	4%	13%	17%	24%	42%

Figure 18



Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.

Table 35

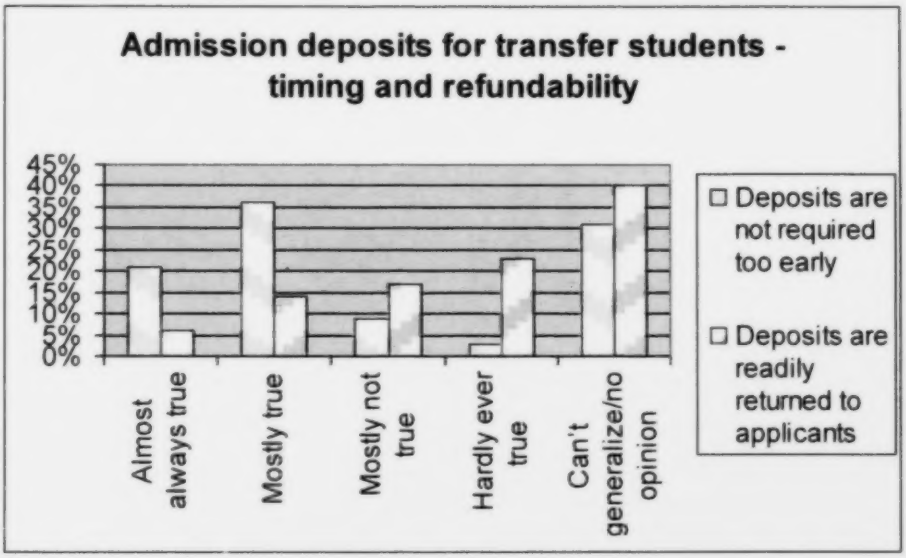
	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true")
Deposits are not required too early	college	2.0
	institute	2.3
	research univ	1.6
	SP teaching univ	1.8
	other	2.3
	all	1.9
Deposits are readily returned to applicants	college	3.1
	institute	4.0
	research univ	3.4
	SP teaching univ	2.6
	other	2.5
	all	3.0

A quarter of secondary school counsellors think that deposits are required too early, but the majority views the dates as satisfactory. School counsellors are understandably unclear on the question of forfeiture of deposits. They may have lost contact with many applicants by the time that deposits are in question or practices might vary widely. However, it appears that postsecondary institutions are unlikely to refund deposits to applicants, with institutes and research universities being least likely. Many postsecondary staff are also unable to clearly answer this question, indicating that they might be unaware of this issue.

Table 36

	Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generaliz e/no opinion
Deposits are not required too early - transfers	21%	36%	9%	3%	31%
Deposits are readily returned to applicants - transfers	6%	14%	17%	23%	40%

Figure 19



Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.

Table 37

	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true")
Deposits are not required too early	college	2.0
	institute	3.7
	research univ	1.9
	SP teaching univ	1.8
	other	1.8
	all	1.9
Deposits are readily returned to applicants	college	3.2
	institute	4.0
	research univ	3.3
	SP teaching univ	2.5
	other	2.3
	all	3.0

Many postsecondary staff appear to be unaware of deposit policies at their institutions for transfer students or the conditions under which the deposits may be refunded. Those that did express an opinion seemed to indicate that the deposits are required at the right time but are not readily refunded to applicants.

Recommendation 7
Application and other deadlines should be published by BCCAT on the EducationPlanner.ca web site, as they once were.

Recommendation 8
Each postsecondary institution should familiarize a broader group of its staff with the policies concerning deposits and the conditions under which they may be refunded.

Secondary school course requirements for admission

Secondary schools offer a variety of courses, but not all are accepted for admission purposes by the postsecondary institutions. Freedom to choose widely from elective courses is desirable, but one sometimes hears that postsecondary admission requirements are sufficiently different from one another that it makes the school's scheduling more complicated than necessary. School staff might wonder whether postsecondary institutions could achieve more consistency in requirements and make their tasks easier.

School Counsellor Survey Questions 8, 10 & 11
What do you think about the admission requirements of the various institutions for current Grade 12 students?

- *The courses they require for admission are similar.*
- *More similar course requirements for admission would be desirable.*
- *The requirements are consistent and well-integrated across the Province.*
- *The requirements make educational sense and support the schools' goals and Province's curriculum.*
- *Students have ample choice of secondary school courses that lead into their postsecondary fields of study.*
- *Students in my school/district may take courses that enable them to attend any postsecondary institution.*
- *Students have plenty of flexibility if they change their plans while attending secondary school.*

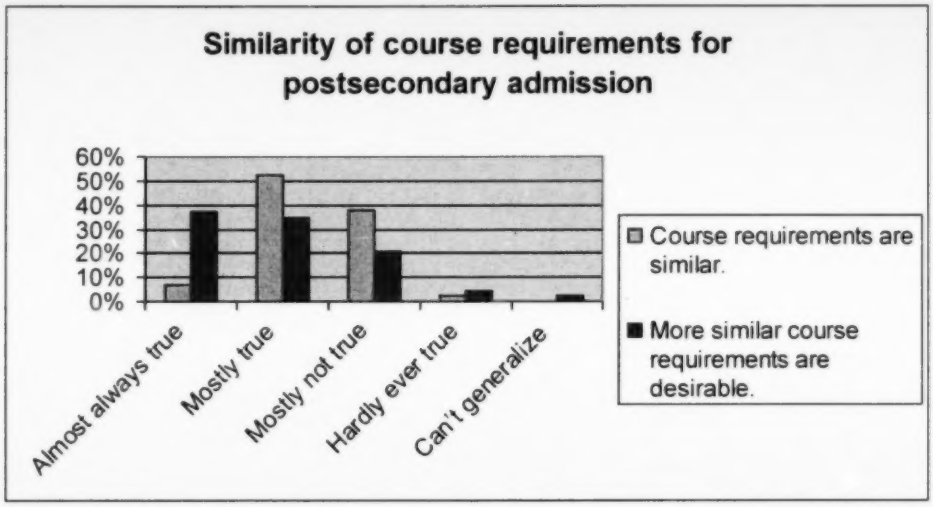
Postsecondary Survey Question 9
What do you think about your institution's current admission requirements for current BC/Yukon Grade 12 students?

- *Our requirements are consistent with those of other comparable institutions.*
- *Students have ample choice of secondary school courses that lead into our programs.*

Table 38

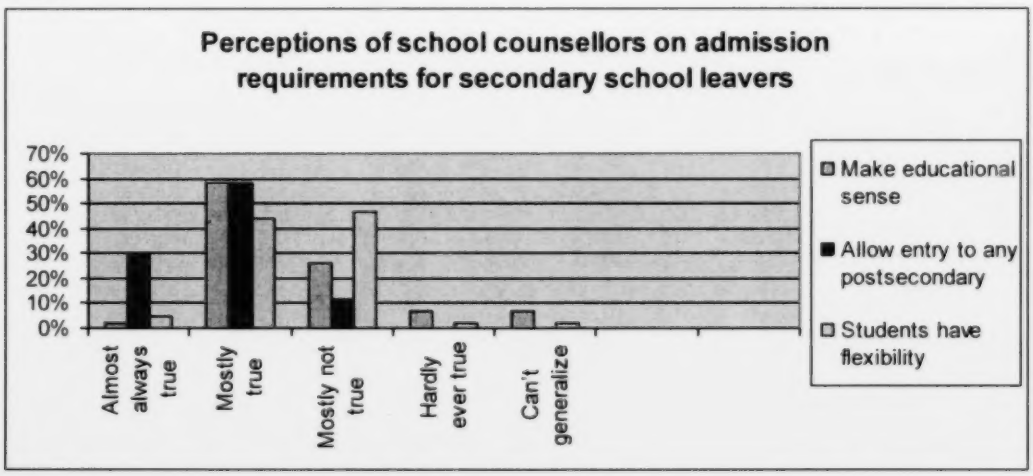
Responses of school counsellors to parts of questions 8, 10 & 11	Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize
Courses are similar.	7%	52%	38%	2%	0%
More similar course requirements desirable.	37%	35%	21%	5%	2%
Make educational sense	2%	58%	26%	7%	7%
Courses allow entry to any postsecondary	30%	58%	12%	0%	0%
Students have flexibility	5%	44%	47%	2%	2%

Figure 20



A slight majority (59%) of school counsellors see the course requirements of postsecondary institutions to be similar, and most prefer that they were even more similar.

Figure 21

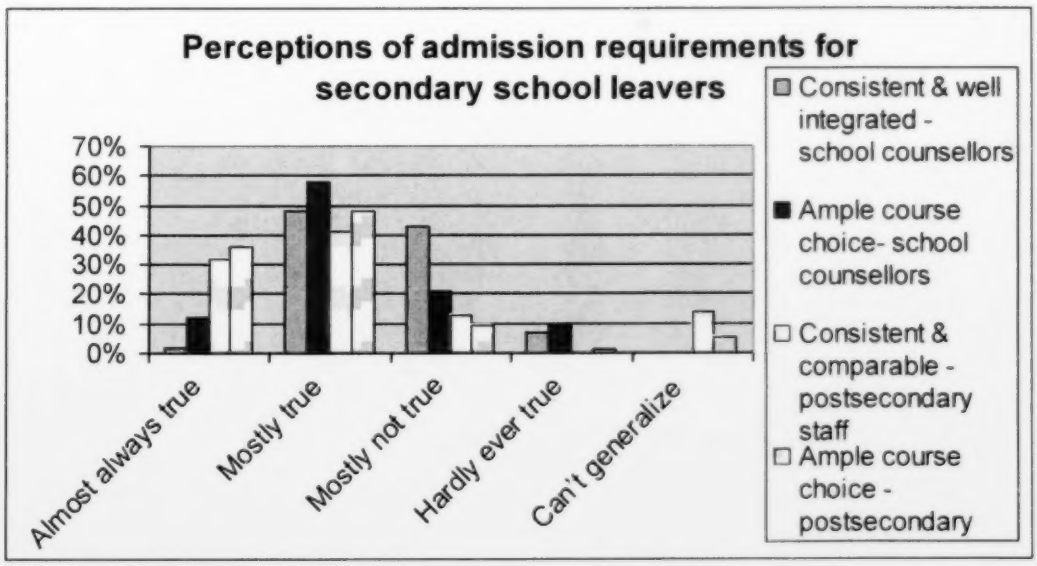


Courses offered by the secondary schools appear to enable their students to enter any postsecondary institution, but postsecondary entrance requirements do not always make educational sense to counsellors. Most significantly, school counsellors judge strongly that students do not enjoy much flexibility in secondary school course choice, possibly because of the particular requirements of postsecondary institutions, especially of some of the research universities, but also because of timetable and other resource constraints in each secondary school.

Table 39

		Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize
Requirements are consistent, well integrated/comparable	school counsellors	2%	48%	43%	7%	0%
	postsecondary staff	32%	41%	13%	0%	14%
Ample course choice	school counsellors	36%	48%	9%	1%	5%
	postsecondary staff	12%	58%	21%	9%	0%

Figure 22



Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.

Table 40

	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true"
Requirements are consistent, well integrated/comparable	college	1.7
	institute	1.7
	research univ	1.5
	SP teaching univ	1.9
	other	1.8
	all	1.8
Ample course choice	college	1.8
	institute	1.8
	research univ	1.4
	SP teaching univ	1.8
	other	1.3
	all	1.7

A wide divergence of opinion is evident between school counsellors and postsecondary staff. About half of school counsellors do not see postsecondary admission requirements as being consistent or well-integrated across the Province. One reason for this difference could be that they are in positions to see differences in admission requirements far more readily than postsecondary staff, who might be focused on their own institutions and might be much less familiar with the requirements of other institutions. An example of poor integration of admission requirements with the secondary curriculum is that one frequently hears from school system representatives that too many students are pressured by the admission requirements into taking courses that are primarily theoretical rather than applied in nature, such as Principles of Mathematics 11, whereas their interest in the subject and resultant learning would be enhanced by taking the optional, more applied Mathematics courses.

There is also divergence on the flexibility issue. To some extent this might result from attribution of different meanings to the question of whether students had ample course choice. Postsecondary staff could point to the wide range of courses that high school graduates could take in their programs, whereas school counsellors will be far more aware of the serious constraints in schools that require that only a limited number of separate courses can be offered to match available demand and teaching resources. For example, there might be some students in a school who would benefit from taking Japanese 12, but the numbers may be insufficient to warrant a dedicated teacher and classroom. Many schools struggle with this issue.

Meanwhile, postsecondary institutions are often not aware of the impacts of their admission requirements on school curricula. This topic warrants serious dialogue between the school system and the postsecondary institutions.

Specific admission requirements

Specific requirements often vary significantly. Some institutions require a C or better in English 12 to enroll in a full academic program or a professional program, such as Nursing. Others require a minimum B to enter similar programs. Some research universities impose additional English requirements if a student does not have at least x % in English 12, where x varies by institution. These varied requirements are presumably all aimed at giving students a reasonable chance of success in their courses.

Where these courses are first year English courses in bachelor's degree programs, they are often transferable to other similar courses at other institutions and therefore, in a sense, interchangeable. They might therefore be expected to have comparable standards and content, yet their entrance standards vary greatly.

School Counsellor Survey Question 11

What do you think about the specific admission requirements of the various institutions for current Grade 12 students?

- *The institutions have clear and consistent positions on their use of Provincial exams.*
- *Making the Provincial exams mostly optional does not affect a student's level of preparation*

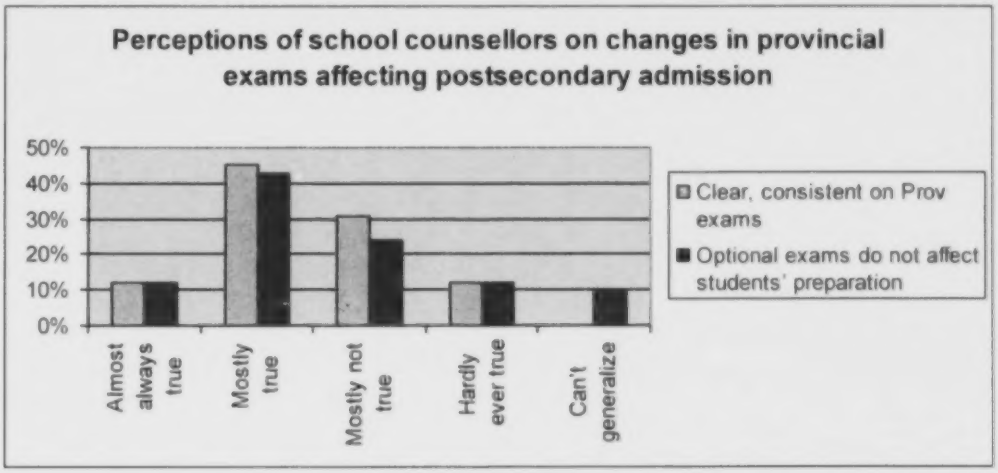
for postsecondary education.

- *The institutions have clear and consistent positions on the minimum standard of English (often measured by English 12 and/or LPI test) necessary to succeed in their programs.*
- *The institutions have clear and consistent positions on the minimum standard of Mathematics (often measured by Principles of Math 11) necessary for success in their programs.*
- *The institutions have clear and consistent positions on the minimum level of 'foreign' language education (often measured by French 11 etc) necessary for success in their programs.*

Table 41

	Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize
Clear, consistent positions on Provincial exams	12%	45%	31%	12%	0%
Optional exams do not affect students' preparation	12%	43%	24%	12%	10%

Figure 23



A large minority of school counsellors feel that the postsecondary institutions are unclear or inconsistent on their positions vis-à-vis Provincial exams.

This might reflect a recent period of uncertainty when some institutions stated that their applicants must take the Provincial exam in each subject in which an exam is offered in order to be counted as an admissible course, but softened this position around 2008 when most B.C. institutions adopted generally consistent policies.

Some inconsistency is still evident, however. For instance Kwantlen Polytechnic University will use the combined final exam and school mark if the exam is written, but not require that it is written, whereas other institutions, for instance the University of British Columbia, will take the school mark alone if the exam mark is lower than the school mark, but will take the combined mark if the exam is written and if the exam mark is higher than the school mark! It is not surprising that

school counsellors report that there is inconsistency in the postsecondary sector. One further reason why this issue might not appear to be consistent to school counsellors is that some of the research universities restrict their Grade 12 'academic' course lists to courses that have Provincial exams, yet applicants are no longer required to write those exams (except for English/Communications 12 which is still mandatory under the Ministry of Education's rules). Hence, certain courses, having an optional Provincial exam are acceptable to those research universities (e.g. Punjabi, Mandarin, Geology) but others, lacking a Provincial exam, are not (e.g. Art, Latin, Arabic, Comparative Civilizations, Calculus). School counsellors might be excused for perceiving this to be an arbitrary selection.

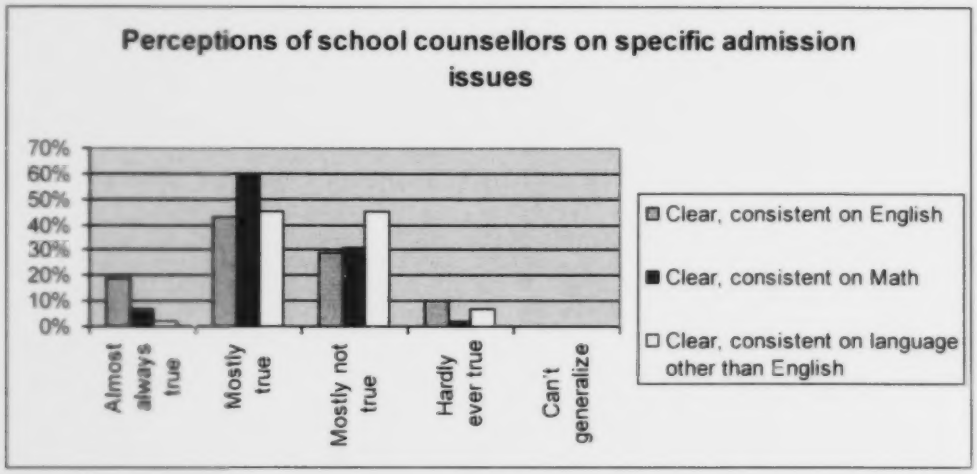
For the purpose of admission, some research universities use no courses from the standard Grade 12 curriculum in the subject areas of information technology/computer science, creative writing , art or music, to name only a few subjects, yet when admitting applicants from other Canadian provinces, all of these subject areas are accepted by those same universities. This practice appears to be restricted to two large B.C. research universities and is not found elsewhere in Canada.

A small majority of school counsellors feel that the optional nature of the Provincial exams will not affect the preparation of students for further study, but there are many who hold differing views and it is presumed that they believe that the students will be less well prepared now that most Provincial exams are no longer required. However, this is conjecture, because that question was not specifically asked.

Table 42

	Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize
Clear, consistent on English	19%	43%	29%	10%	0%
Clear, consistent on Mathematics	7%	60%	31%	2%	0%
Clear, consistent language other than English	2%	45%	45%	7%	0%

Figure 24



Some 39% of school counsellors do not see the B.C. postsecondary institutions as having clear or consistent English requirements. It might be illustrative to see why that might be so, although it is not easy to gather this information together. One could assume that an applicant who expects shortly to graduate from secondary school is indecisive about the specific program s/he seeks, but is generally interested in Arts/Fine Arts/Social Studies at a college, special purpose teaching university or at a research university in the Vancouver area. The applicant sees that each program at the following institutions either requires or encourages enrollment in a first year English literature or literature/composition/writing course, most of which are shown in the BC Transfer Guide as being transferable to other institutions as first year English credit. This applicant then faces a baffling variety of English requirements, all ostensibly established for the same purpose – success in a first year English course.

Table 43

Institution	Grade 12 Course required	Minimum acceptable admission Mark	Exemption from further tests (e.g. LPI) to take academic 1st year English courses requires minimum mark of	LPI score required to enroll in academic 1st yr English course or writing course
Capilano University	English	C+ (67%)	A (86%) English 12	Level 4, essay section 26
Douglas College	English OR English Literature OR Technical and Professional Communications OR	C-(50%)	C (60%) English 12 OR English Literature 12 OR Technical and Professional Communications 12 OR	Level 4
	Communications	C-(50)	B (73%) Communications 12	
Emily Carr University of Art & Design	English OR English First Peoples	C (60%)	80% English 12 OR 80% English Literature 12	Level 4
Kwantlen Polytechnic University	English OR English Literature OR Communications OR Technical and Professional Communications	C (60%)	B (73%) English 12	Level 5 with essay 30 Or local English Placement Test
Langara College	English OR Communications OR English First Peoples OR Technical and Professional Communications	C- (50%)	A (86%) English 12 OR A (86%) English Literature 12	LPI score not specified. Student encouraged to take local test.
University of British Columbia	English English First Peoples	C- (50%)	75% English 12 OR 75% English Literature 12	5 essay section
Simon Fraser University	English English First Peoples	C- (50%)	75% English 12 OR 75% English Literature 12	4 essay and 50% all other sections

Sources: EducationPlanner.ca and institutional web sites

To enter Capilano University, our applicant must have C+ in English 12 and to avoid further testing must achieve 86% (A) in English 12 in order to take a first year English course. However, if Douglas College is chosen instead, the requirements to enter a similar English course are much reduced – the applicant may take an applied secondary school English course and achieve a much lower mark to avoid further English tests and enter an academic degree-stream first year English course.

It is possible that these requirements are not accurately stated here, despite taking much care in transposing information. If so, this is a further illustration of the lack of clarity and consistency in the publication of the admission and course requirements of the institutions.

School counsellors also indicate that Mathematics admission requirements are an issue – presumably this relates to some research universities requiring for entry to all faculties Principles of Mathematics 11, in some cases with a minimum 60%

mark. Mathematics requirements are expected to change with the pending implementation of a new Mathematics curriculum by the Ministry of Education.

Many school counsellors (52%) identify the language-other-than-English requirements of some institutions (mainly some research universities) as problematical. Those universities require Grade 11 language courses from BC Grade 12 graduates, but do not require the equivalent courses from either Grade 12 applicants from other provinces or from BC transfer students.

How stable are the admission requirements?

Institutions change their requirements from time to time. A long-standing criticism from secondary schools is that postsecondary institutions do not always give enough lead time when making such changes. However in recent years, there appear to have been more changes in the secondary school graduation program and provincial examination processes, initiated by policy changes of the Ministry of Education, than have been initiated by the postsecondary institutions. For example, in most academic Grade 12 subjects, such as Biology 12, mandatory provincial exams became optional for students, requiring a prompt response from each postsecondary institution, rather than vice versa.

Nevertheless, school curriculum planning can be significantly affected by changes in a postsecondary institution's admission policy. In 2009, Simon Fraser University will no longer require a fifth academic secondary school course in its admission average, (this was an option in 2007, 2008) but in doing so will drop all of the following courses from its list of eligible Grade 12 academic courses:

Table 44

Art 12	Arts Foundation 12		
Studio Arts 12: Fabric and Fibre	Studio Arts 12: Printmaking and Graphic Design	Studio Arts 12: Ceramics and Sculpture	Studio Arts 12: Drawing and Painting
Calculus 12	Music: Composition and Technology 12	Drama: Film and Television 12	Writing 12
Comparative Civilizations 12	Dance: Choreography 12	Dance: Performance 12	Economics 12
Forests 12	Information Technology 12	Law 12	Visual Arts 12: Media Arts
Theatre Performance 12: Acting	Theatre Performance 12: Directing and Script Development	Theatre Production 12: Technical Theatre	Theatre Production 12: Theatre Management

About two years' notice was given for this change, which might seem sufficient, except that school district hiring of teachers in specialized subjects has a much longer time horizon.

A recent example of a change in transfer admission requirements was the requirement for quantitative skills and writing skills courses, brought in by Simon Fraser University. These changes applied also to secondary school entrants.

School Counsellor Survey Question 10
Requirements don't change much year-to-year but if they do change, the institutions give plenty of lead-time to schools.

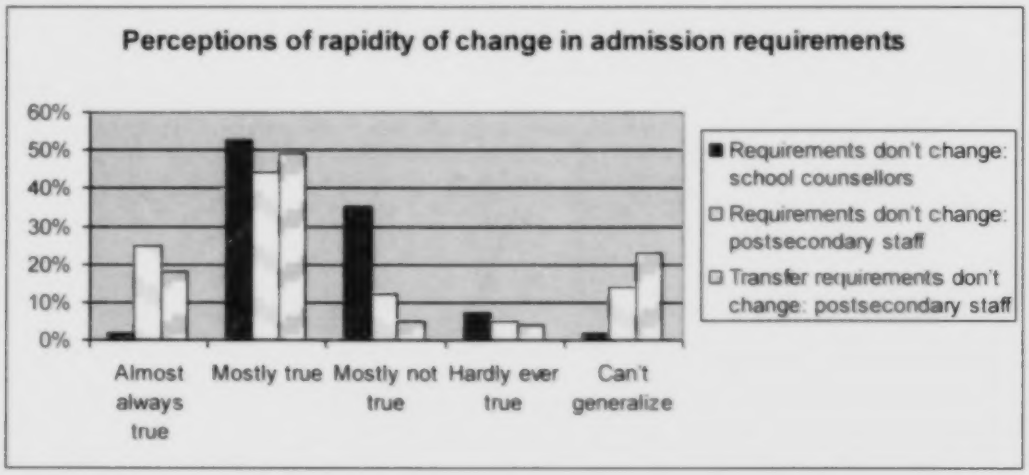
Postsecondary Survey Question 9 (admission from secondary school)
Our requirements don't change much from year to year but if they do change, we give plenty of lead-time to schools.

Postsecondary Survey Question 12 (transfer admission from another postsecondary institution)
Our requirements don't change much from year to year but if they do change, we give plenty of lead-time to the other postsecondary institutions.

Table 45

		Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize
Requirements don't change much, but if they change there is good lead-time	School counsellors (admission from secondary school)	2%	53%	35%	7%	2%
	Postsecondary staff (admission from secondary school)	25%	44%	12%	5%	14%
	Postsecondary staff (transfer admission)	18%	49%	5%	4%	23%

Figure 25



Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.
Table 46

	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true")
Gr 12 entrance requirements don't change much, but if they change there is good lead-time	college	2.2
	institute	2.3
	research univ	1.7
	SP teaching univ	1.8
	other	1.8
	all	2.0
Transfer requirements don't change much, but if they change there is good lead-time	college	2.2
	institute	2.4
	research univ	2.0
	SP teaching univ	1.7
	other	1.5
	all	2.0

School counsellors have different perspectives from the postsecondary staff, apparently not always receiving adequate lead time to fully accommodate changes. The high proportion of postsecondary respondents who have no opinion on the transfer admission question probably reflects stability over several years in their own institution's admission requirements or the absence of any separate transfer admission requirements for that institution.

Interim course marks

Many Grade 12 students receive admission offers based on their interim marks in Grade12 courses. However, schools have no common rules for reporting the interim mark in a course. Methods differ even within many school districts, if there is more than one secondary school in that district. Such marks may be cumulative or not, depending on the software package used at the school. Interim marks are heavily used by postsecondary institutions to select new students and award scholarships of all kinds.

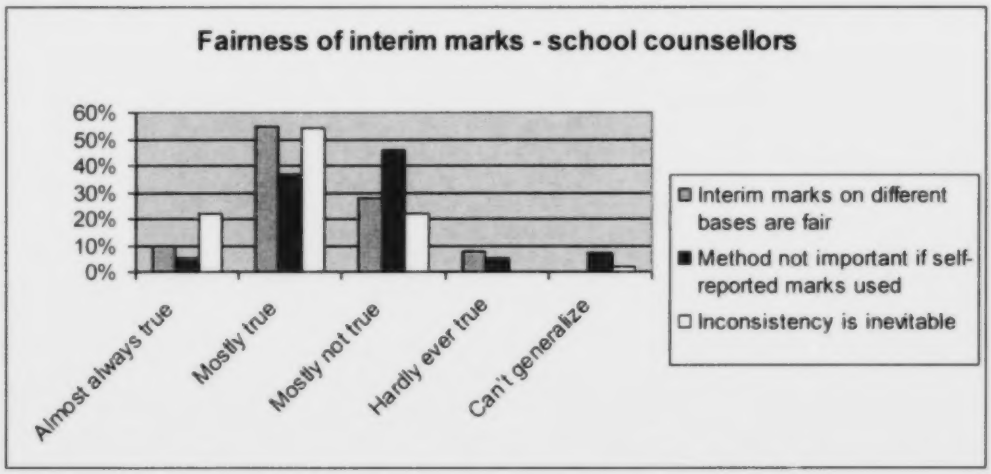
School Counsellor Survey Question 14
Schools have no common rules for reporting interim marks in a course. Those marks may be cumulative or not, often depending on the software package used. Interim marks are heavily used by postsecondary institutions to select new students and award scholarships. How fair is this?

- *It's fair to use interim marks based on different bases.*
- *Variations in method are not important because self-reported marks are accepted.*
- *Inconsistency in grading is inevitable.*

Table 47

	Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize
It's fair to use interim marks based on different bases	10%	55%	28%	8%	0%
Variations in method are not important because self-reported marks are accepted	5%	37%	46%	5%	7%
Inconsistency in grading is inevitable	22%	54%	22%	0%	2%

Figure 26



It is unclear if school counsellors feel that the use of different methods for deriving an interim mark is an issue that requires action, although they see the current process as generally flawed. Many schools are changing software packages and more standardization of methods is one likely outcome of this change, but it is not known how long it will take for all schools to use the same method.

Admission conditions

Sometimes, it is learned that an applicant to a postsecondary institution who has been conditionally admitted and is registered in courses is rejected, or must switch programs and courses at the last moment because a condition of admission has not been met. Conditions of admission might be that the applicant must graduate, must pass all courses currently in progress, must achieve a minimum final mark in a subject such as English 12 or must achieve a certain average on specified courses. Some institutions allow an applicant to be one course short of graduation but may withdraw an offer of admission (or move the student to a less-desired program such as an upgrading program) if the student lacks more than one course. Because most Provincial exam results are released at the end of July, offers for September program entry are reviewed routinely in August. Hence, offer withdrawals may occur very shortly before a new student is scheduled to start at her or his new institution.

School Counsellor Survey Question 16

What do you think about admission conditions set by the postsecondary institutions? (i.e. An offer that is made before final results are known might be revoked or withdrawn if the final results are unsatisfactory).

- *Any admission conditions are fair and reasonable.*
- *Institutions only revoke conditional offers in clear-cut and justifiable situations.*

Postsecondary Survey Question 16

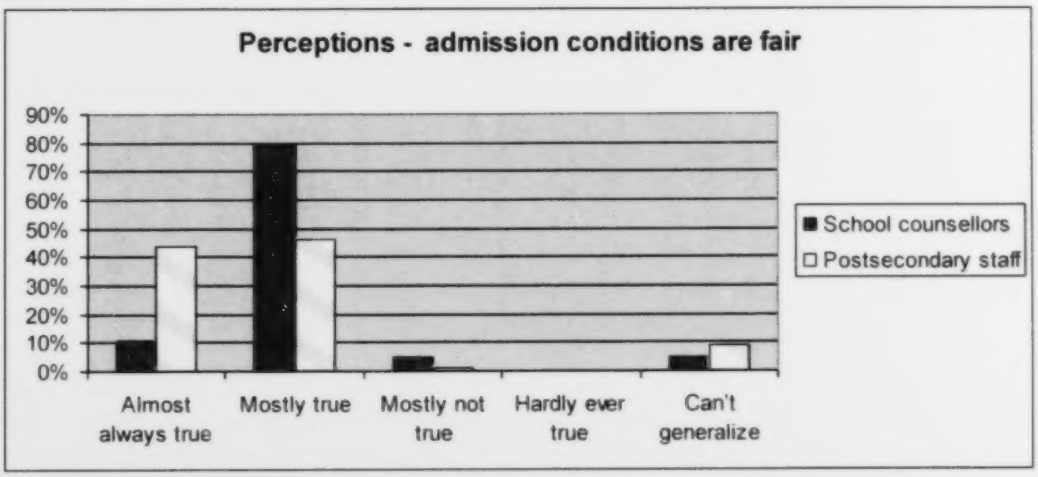
What do you think about admission conditions set by your institution? (i.e. When an offer is made before final results are known at the applicant's previous school/institution?)

- *Our admission conditions are fair and reasonable.*
- *We only revoke conditional offers in clear-cut and justifiable situations.*

Table 48

		Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize
conditions are fair and reasonable	school counsellors	11%	79%	5%	0%	5%
	postsecondary staff	44%	46%	1%	0%	9%
conditional offers only revoked in clear situations	school counsellors	13%	74%	5%	0%	8%
	postsecondary staff	39%	36%	2%	2%	20%

Figure 27

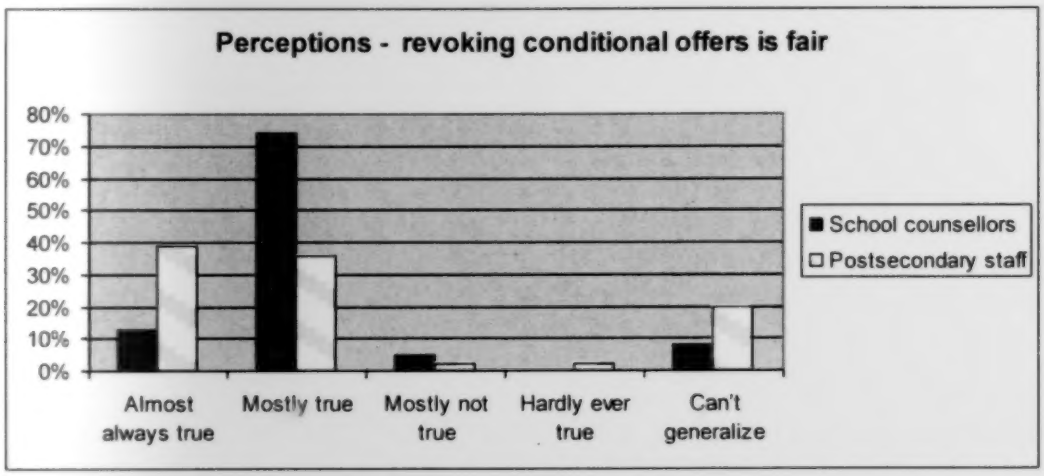


Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.

Table 49

	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true")
conditions are fair and reasonable	college	1.6
	institute	1.8
	research univ	1.6
	SP teaching univ	1.3
	other	1.8
	all	1.5

Figure 28



Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.

Table 50

	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true")
conditional offers only revoked in clear situations	college	1.7
	institute	1.5
	research univ	1.5
	SP teaching univ	1.5
	other	1.8
	all	1.6

Both school counsellors and postsecondary staff seem satisfied that admission conditions are both sufficiently fair and clear and that the postsecondary institutions revoke offers only with justification. In recent years, postsecondary institutions have gone to considerable lengths to make their admission conditions clear. This is more so recently, since enrollment pressures have declined. Some years ago, certain institutions were notoriously vague about the final admission conditions, which remained loose until after final provincial exam results were released. School counsellors favour clear, realistic conditions, that give predictable outcomes, and provide incentives for students to maintain good work habits after they have received postsecondary admission offers.

Recommendation 9

A comprehensive and collaborative review of admission requirements by some of the larger research universities is overdue. Incremental changes made over a number of years have resulted in a set of requirements that is inconsistent and makes little educational sense. Admission requirements of these institutions have an effect on the school system that is disproportional to the numbers of students that these institutions admit each year.

Recommendation 10

All postsecondary institutions should jointly review English requirements for applicants who are deemed to have English as their primary language. The review should consider requirements for entry to the various programs and prerequisites for entry to the institutions' first year English courses and should include, in addition to secondary school course and grade minima, the need for further testing of English skills and the standards of achievement expected in such tests.

Fairness in admission decisions

Popular programs receive many more qualified applicants than there are available spaces. Various methods are used to select among qualified applicants. Some institutions rank candidates by school marks alone or in conjunction with interviews. Others believe that there are fairer, less subjective ways to select from among qualified candidates, such as random selection (lottery) or by date of application. School counsellors are generally aware of the different methods used by the various programs within institutions and are therefore in good positions to comment.

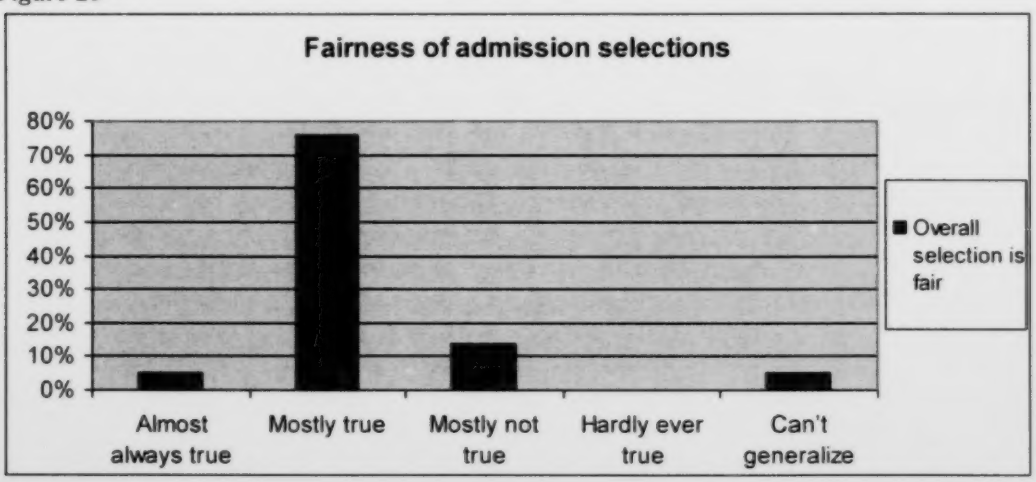
School Counsellor Survey Question 15
What do you think about the fairness of the admission process at the institutions when considering Grade 12 students for limited, selective programs, such as Nursing, Commerce, Dental Hygiene or Engineering?

- *Selection processes in general are fair.*
- *Random selection from a pool of qualified applicants is fair.*
- *A wait list or preference given to a persistent applicant is fair.*
- *Selection based in part on audition or interview is fair.*
- *Selection based only on selected school marks is fair.*
- *Selection based in part on broader criteria (extra-curricular, community service) is fair.*

Table 51

	Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize
In general selection is fair	5%	76%	14%	0%	5%

Figure 29

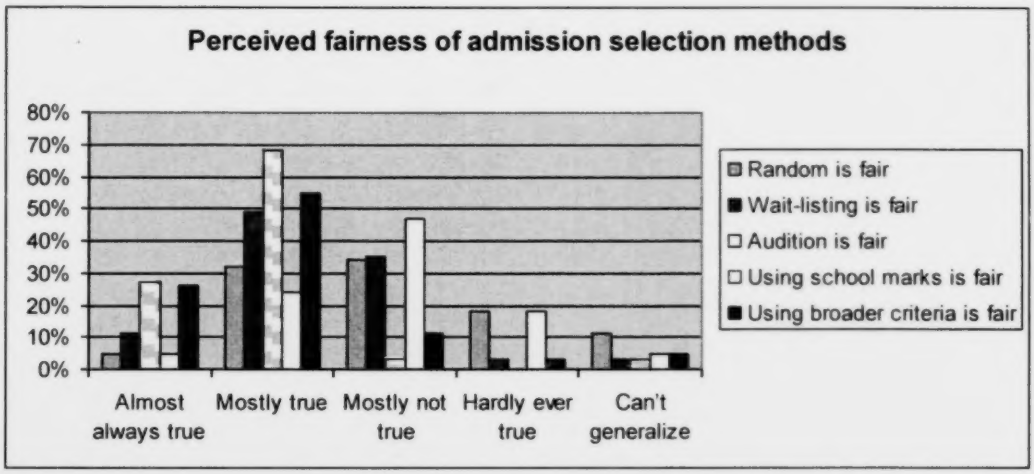


Generally, selection is seen as fair.

Table 52

	Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize
Random selection is fair	5%	32%	34%	18%	11%
Wait-listing is fair	11%	49%	35%	3%	3%
Audition/interview is fair	27%	68%	3%	0%	3%
Selection on school marks alone is fair	5%	24%	47%	18%	5%
Selection on broader criteria is fair	26%	55%	11%	3%	5%

Figure 30



Audition/interview, use of broader criteria and wait listing are all seen by school counsellors as fairer than random selection. The least fair method is the use of school marks alone. Essentially, this says that provided an applicant graduates, and has a C in English 12 and perhaps a similar mark in Principles of Mathematics 12, there is no merit in preferring one candidate over another. This outcome is slightly surprising, because it was expected that school counsellors would have more confidence in the predictive nature of school marks.

The use of both random selection and selection based on marks alone are widespread, so it must be presumed that there are significant benefits to the institution in using these methods, such as reduced staff or time costs, or that this form of selection better reflects the egalitarian principles of the institution.

Admission requirements for transfer students

Most institutions do not have separate admission requirements for transfer students, but such applicants must meet their institution's general admission requirements. Research universities mostly set separate admission requirements for those applicants who have substantially completed a year of postsecondary study, in lieu of meeting the more common admission requirements set for secondary school graduates.

Transfer admission selection criteria, known as 'cut-off averages', rather than the published admission requirements themselves were at one time a subject of considerable controversy when most research universities had insufficient spaces in some faculties for all qualified transfer applicants. Ranking by academic average was most commonly used to select from among qualified applicants. Capacity at most institutions has increased substantially since those times. Consequently, a competitive average, higher than the minimum published admission average for admission, is less common than it once was for transfer applicants.

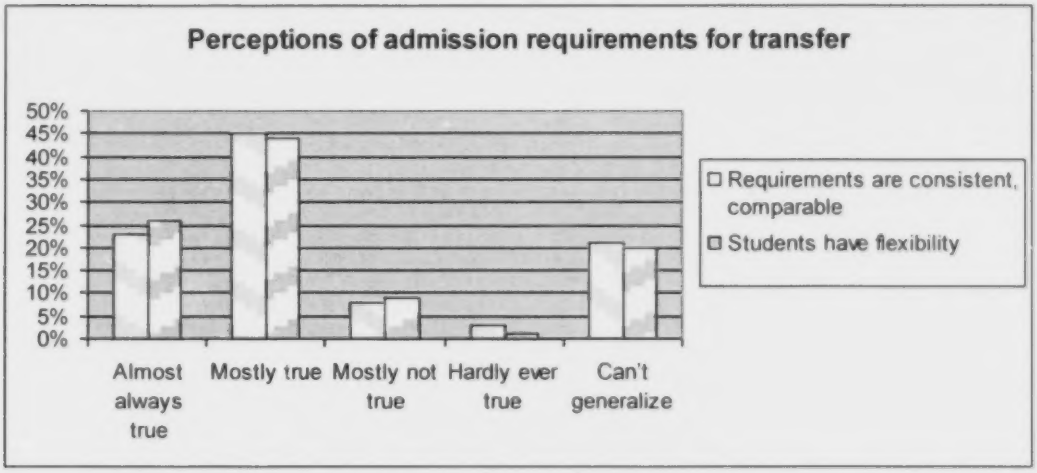
Postsecondary Survey Question 12
What do you think about your institution's admission requirements for transfer students (typically transfer of 24 or more academic credits with a min C average)?

- *The requirements are consistent with those of other comparable institutions.*
- *Students have plenty of flexibility if they change their plans when attending their first postsecondary institution.*

Table 53

	Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize
Requirements are consistent, comparable	23%	45%	8%	3%	21%
Students have flexibility	26%	44%	9%	1%	20%

Figure 31



Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.
Table 54

	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true")
Requirements are consistent, comparable	college	1.7
	institute	2.2
	research univ	1.8
	SP teaching univ	2.1
	other	1.5
	all	1.9
Students have flexibility	college	1.8
	institute	2.3
	research univ	2.1
	SP teaching univ	1.7
	other	1.5
	all	1.8

Survey responses do not show major issues with transfer admission requirements. About 10% of respondents feel that the requirements are inconsistent or lack flexibility and about 20% of respondents feel that they cannot generalize, perhaps because their institutions do not have separate admission requirements for transfers. Institute staff indicate that transfer students have less flexibility in course selection than do respondents from other groups of postsecondary institutions. This could be an outcome of the highly specific nature of many institute programs that often have more rigid prerequisites than many other programs.

Rating the transfer experience

School counsellors and postsecondary staff were asked for their impressions of the transfer experiences of students who first attend a local institution, such as a college, and who plan to later transfer to another institution to complete a higher credential than that offered at the local institution.

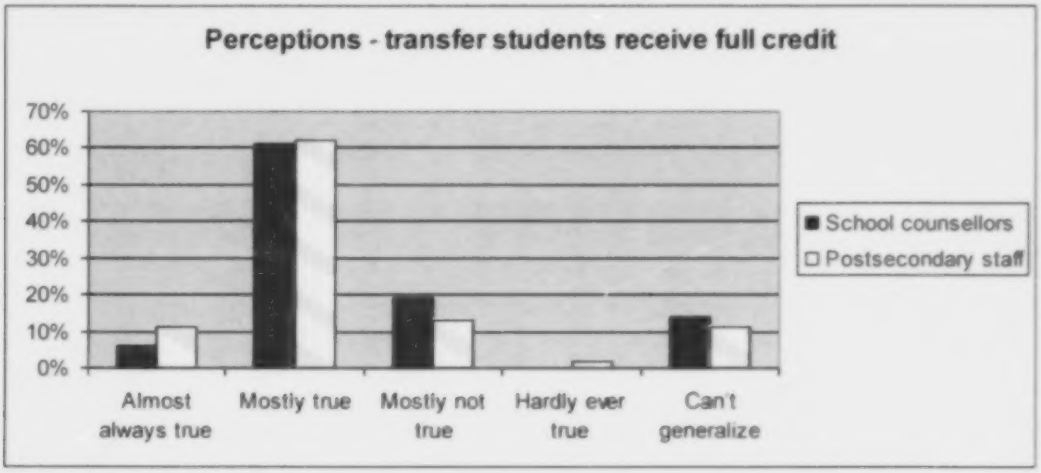
School Counsellor Survey Question 17/Postsecondary Survey Question 14
Many students attend a local postsecondary institution, such as a college, with the intention of transferring to another institution, such as a university, a year or two later. What is your opinion of students' experiences?

- *Students receive full course credit when they transfer.*
- *Students make easier transitions when they first attend a local institution.*
- *Students achieve their goals more easily if they first attend a local institution.*
- *The overall cost of postsecondary education is reduced if a student first attends a local institution.*
- *Institutions that accept transfer students treat them equally compared with students who entered directly from Grade 12.*
- *There is no stigma attached to a student who first attends a local institution.*

Table 55

		Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize
Students receive full credit	school counsellors	6%	61%	19%	0%	14%
	postsecondary staff	11%	62%	13%	2%	11%

Figure 32



Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.

Table 56

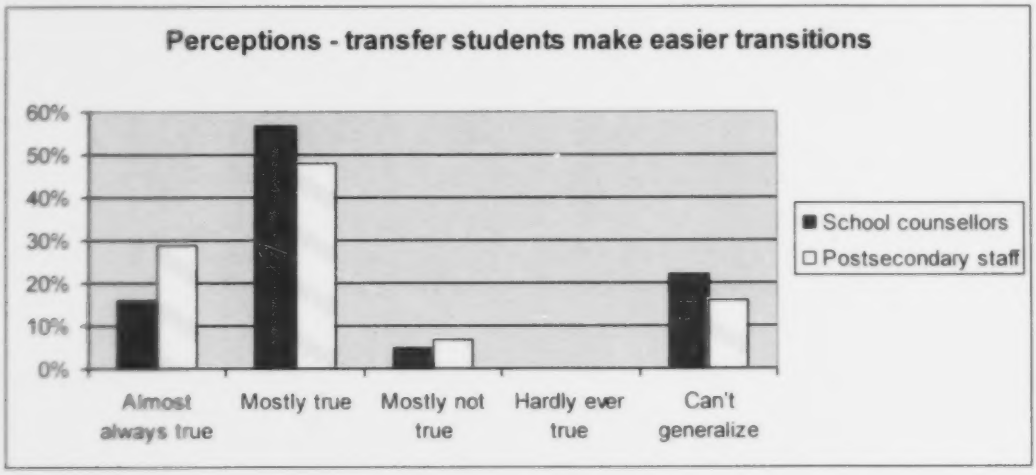
	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true")
Students receive full credit	college	1.9
	institute	3.0
	research univ	2.1
	SP teaching univ	2.1
	other	2.0
	all	2.1

There is agreement that most transfer students receive full credit when they transfer, but almost 20% of school counsellors did not believe that to be mostly true.

Table 57

		Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize
Transfer students make easier transitions	school counsellors	16%	57%	5%	0%	22%
	postsecondary staff	29%	48%	7%	0%	16%

Figure 33



Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.

Table 58

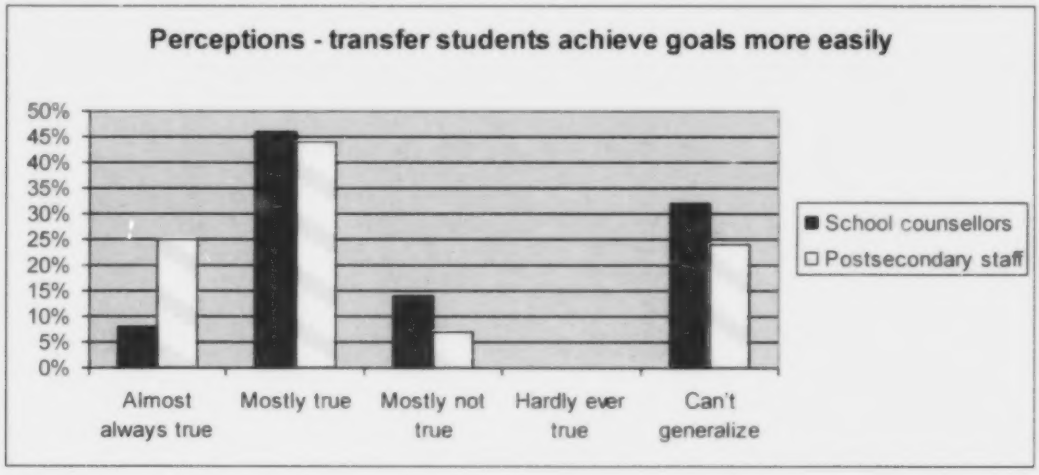
	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true")
Transfer students make easier transitions	college	1.6
	institute	2.5
	research univ	2.0
	SP teaching univ	1.8
	other	2.0
	all	1.7

There is a strong perception that transfer students make easier transitions, but it is not shared by institute staff.

Table 59

		Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize
Students achieve goals more easily	school counsellors	8%	46%	14%	0%	32%
	postsecondary staff	25%	44%	7%	0%	24%

Figure 34



Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.

Table 60

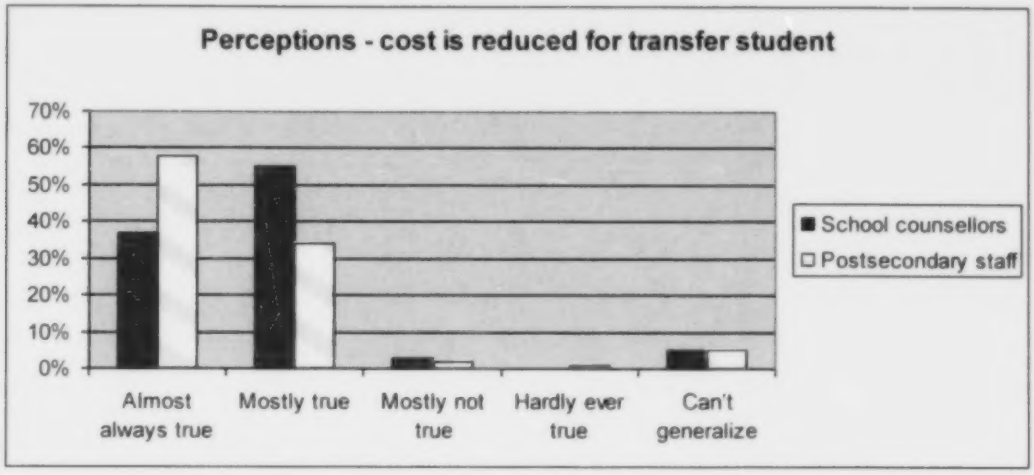
	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true")
Students achieve goals more easily	college	1.6
	institute	2.0
	research univ	2.3
	SP teaching univ	1.8
	other	2.0
	all	1.8

School counsellors seem less certain than postsecondary staff as to whether transfer students achieve their goals more easily. College staff are much more likely to agree with this proposition than staff from research universities.

Table 61

		Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize
Cost is reduced	school counsellors	37%	55%	3%	0%	5%
	postsecondary staff	58%	34%	2%	1%	5%

Figure 35



Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.

Table 62

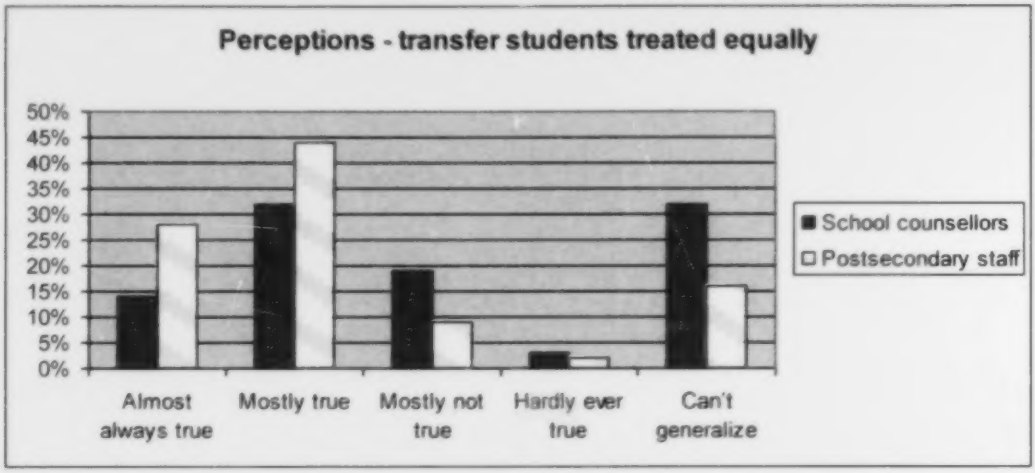
	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true")
Overall cost is reduced for transfers	college	1.2
	institute	2.3
	research univ	1.5
	SP teaching univ	1.6
	other	1.5
	all	1.4

The clearest conclusion from this question is that the overall cost of postsecondary education is seen to be usually reduced by first attending a local institution. This view is not strongly shared by staff who work at institutes.

Table 63

		Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize
Transfer students are treated equally	school counsellors	14%	32%	19%	3%	32%
	postsecondary staff	28%	44%	9%	2%	16%

Figure 36



Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.

Table 64

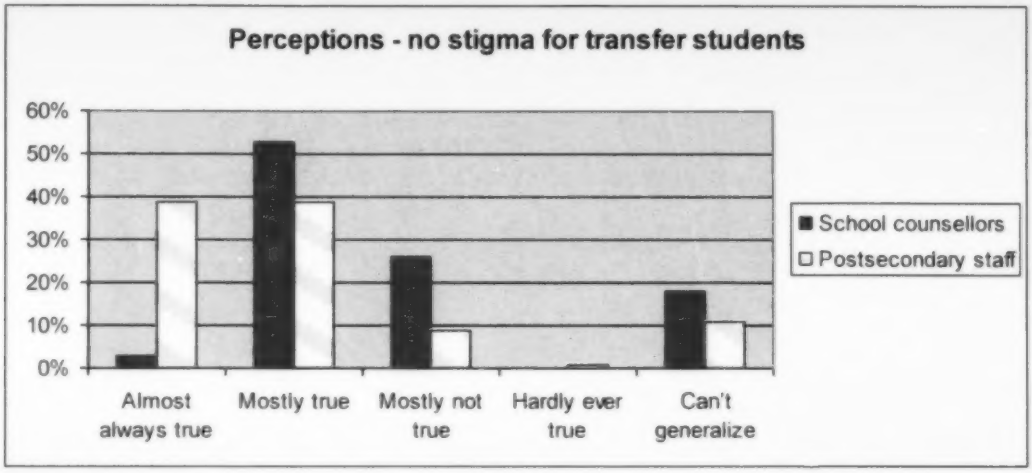
	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true")
Transfer students are treated equally	college	1.6
	institute	1.7
	research univ	1.7
	SP teaching univ	2.1
	other	2.0
	all	1.8

Postsecondary staff seemed more positive about the treatment that transfer students receive, but a very high proportion of school counsellors were not able to generalize on this issue.

Table 65

		Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize
No stigma	School counsellors	3%	53%	26%	0%	18%
	Postsecondary staff	39%	39%	9%	1%	11%

Figure 37



Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.

Table 66

	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true"
There is no stigma attached to a student who first attends a local institution.	college	1.7
	institute	1.8
	research univ	1.5
	SP teaching univ	1.8
	other	1.8
	all	1.7

School counsellors are more likely than their counterparts in the postsecondary institutions to perceive that there is a stigma associated with attending a local institution, but a majority of school counsellors (56%) think that there is, for the most part, no stigma. Among the postsecondary staff, those at research universities were least likely to believe that there was a stigma attached to transfer students.

In these sections dealing with transfer students, it is of interest that respondents from different types of postsecondary institutions often have different perceptions. E.g, research university respondents are less likely than those from colleges to agree that transfer students have flexibility on admission requirements, make easier transitions, and receive full credit, although they are more likely to agree that the overall cost is reduced for transfer students. More striking difference emerge in examining responses from institutes (which implies from BCIT as that is the only institute represented here). Respondents from BCIT are much less likely to agree that transfer students have consistent, comparable or flexible admission requirements, that they receive full credit, make easier transitions, or enjoy reduced costs. Several comments in the open ended comments section of this report suggest that BCIT staff wish for greater participation on the part of BCIT in the BC Transfer Guide.

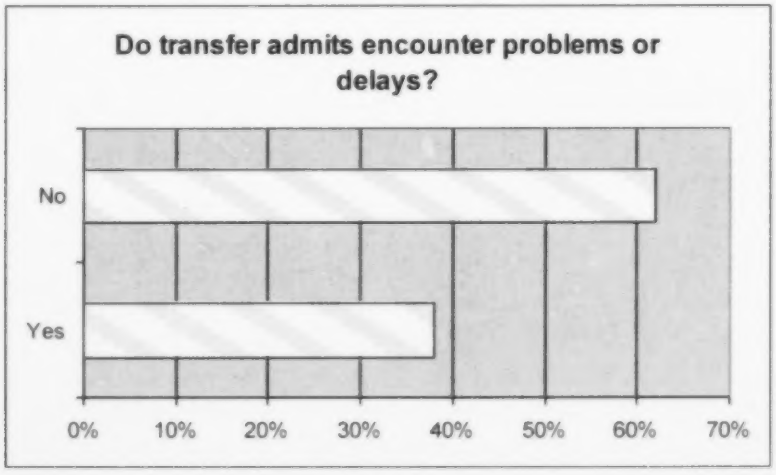
Delays for transfer students

Transfer admission is usually more complex and labour-intensive than admission from secondary school, largely because of the need to determine transfer credit. Long delays are often the result for transfer applicants, especially if they have course records from outside of B.C. Transfer students often take vacant spaces in years 2 and 3 that are not as easily forecasted as spaces in year 1. Consequently, some research universities have delayed until the last moment offers of admission to transfer students with less competitive averages, until it has become clear that there will be space for these new students.

Postsecondary Survey Question 15
Based on your experience, do you think transfer students entering or leaving your institution encounter problems or undue delays with the process?

- *If yes, please describe and suggest a remedy.*

Figure 38



Most frequent comments (paraphrased – see Appendix 1 for full comments)

- understaffing - process needs more resources
- slow processes, especially transfer credit evaluation from outside BC - need streamlining
- applicants apply late, have trouble with procedure, or have unrealistic expectations – need better instructions
- applicants should not need to re-supply transcripts to a second BC institution and previously assigned transfer credit should be accepted by that second institution.

There might be merit in institutions discussing the possibility of forgoing document and transfer credit evaluation of records that have already been processed by another institution in B.C. However, this might also be seen as an unreasonable extension of trust (or dependency) in the work of other institutions. In addition, policies vary between institutions and evaluations are often performed for widely

different purposes.

Recommendation 11
Postsecondary institutions should routinely monitor the time it takes for transfer applicant admission and transfer credit decisions to be made and compare those results with their service goals and with the time required for decisions on direct entry students. If required, appropriate plans for remedy can then be developed and prioritized.

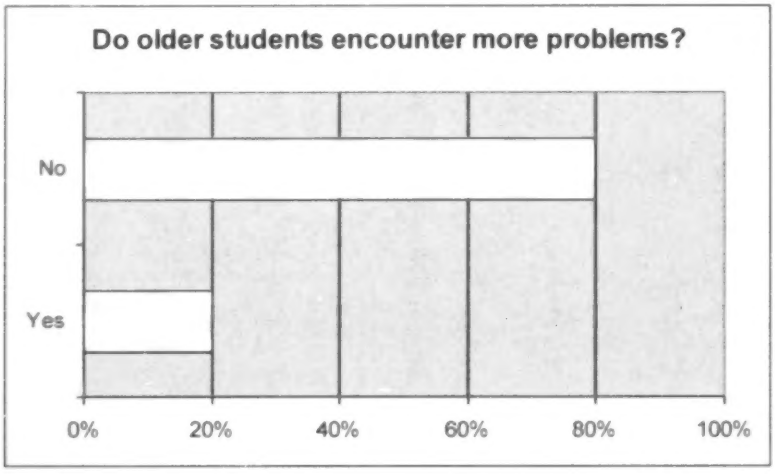
Recommendation 12
BCIT should be encouraged to conduct a survey of transfer students (or students who enter BCIT with other postsecondary credit or experience, if not actual transfer credit) to determine whether their needs are being met and if different processes or policies, such as more transparency in transfer credit, might benefit the institution and its students.

Perceived age effects

One sometimes hears that older students encounter more problems than do younger students in gaining admission to postsecondary institutions. The question arises because of a perception that older applicants are generally less satisfied with the service levels they encounter when they apply for admission. This might result both from increased personal constraints (e.g., work and family responsibilities) and greater expectations of service.

Postsecondary Survey Question 17
Based on your experience, do you think older students entering or leaving your institution encounter more problems than younger students?

Figure 39



Individual responses are in Appendix 1. The most frequent comments are (paraphrased)

Table 67

Yes	less comfortable with on-line processes
	often need skills upgrading
	harder for them to obtain transcripts
	financial barriers due to responsibilities
	don't receive as much help
	have more time challenges, personal issues
	need more advising

Table 68

No	seem more satisfied
	make own decisions and do their own research
	maturity helps

The general view is that an applicant's age is not a negative factor. To determine actual satisfaction as a function of applicant age, a direct applicant survey will be required.

Disputed decisions

Many institutions follow the principles of natural justice and have developed procedures whereby aggrieved parties may appeal decisions of the institution, even if the person affected is not part of that institutional community, such as an unsuccessful admission applicant.

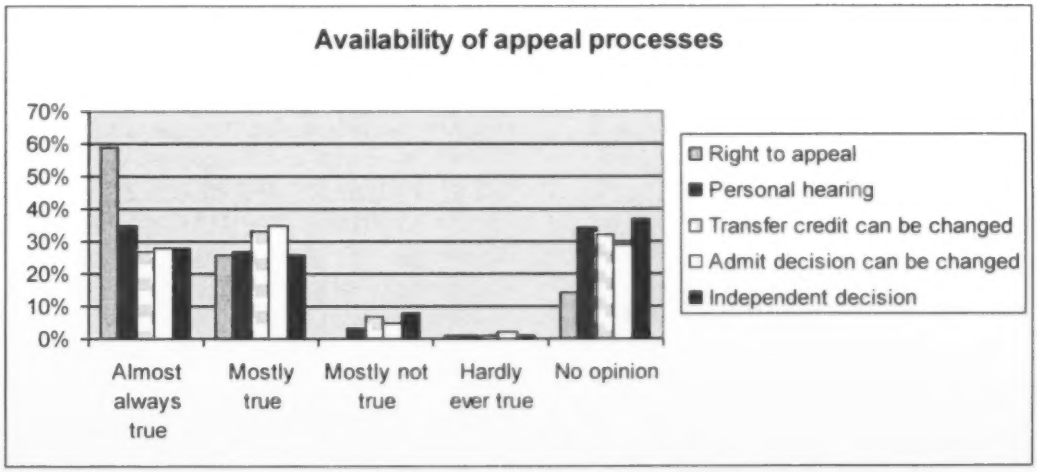
Postsecondary Survey Question 18
If an applicant, whether transferring from another postsecondary institution or entering from secondary school, disputes a decision at your institution

- *S/he has a right to appeal that decision*
- *S/he can have a personal hearing*
- *Transfer credit can be adjusted through this process*
- *An admission decision can be changed through this process*
- *Appeals are heard by individuals who are independent and did not make the original decision*

Table 69

	Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	No opinion
Right to appeal	59%	26%	0%	1%	14%
Personal hearing	35%	27%	3%	1%	34%
Transfer credit decision can be changed	27%	33%	7%	1%	32%
Admit decision can be changed	28%	35%	5%	2%	29%
Independence of decision maker	28%	26%	8%	1%	37%

Figure 40



Breakdown of postsecondary staff perceptions by type of postsecondary institution.
Table 70

	Type of postsecondary institution	Mean score (where 1.0 is "Almost always true")
Right to appeal	college	1.4
	institute	1.3
	research univ	1.0
	SP teaching univ	1.5
	other	1.3
	all	1.3
Personal hearing	college	1.6
	institute	1.7
	research univ	1.7
	SP teaching univ	1.4
	other	1.7
	all	1.6
Transfer credit decision can be changed	college	2.0
	institute	2.3
	research univ	1.6
	SP teaching univ	1.5
	other	1.7
	all	1.7
Admit decision can be changed	college	2.0
	institute	2.0
	research univ	1.3
	SP teaching univ	1.6
	other	2.0
	all	1.7
Independence of decision maker	college	1.7
	institute	1.3
	research univ	2.0
	SP teaching univ	1.8
	other	1.0
	all	1.7

It seems that there is not good knowledge among postsecondary staff of available appeal procedures and whether such procedures apply to transfer credit. This might be a result of the relatively large proportion of respondents who are somewhat removed from the admission process (66%), e.g., department unit staff (see above). For instance, the roles of those who had no opinion on whether or not an admission decision could be changed through an appeal were as follows:

program adviser / academic adviser	12
admissions officer, recruiter	5
registrar / administrator	2
program head/school chair	2
career/resource adviser	1
financial aid adviser	1
instructor, diagnostic test administrator	1
student and curriculum coordinator	1

In institutions where appeal processes exist, the processes mostly seem to have

sufficient authority and independence. However, from the point of view of an applicant to an institution, the existence of an appeal process is less useful if it cannot result in a changed admission decision or an adjustment to transfer credit.

Recommendation 13
Institutions should make their appeal processes known to all those who have dealings with new students and applicants.

Recommendation 14
Institutions should ensure that their appeal processes have authority to change decisions concerning admission and transfer credit.

EAL (ESL) issues

Postsecondary institutions often use different methods for determining applicants' English language skills. Applicants may be either domestic or international. The result of this determination is whether the student may begin a full course load in the English language medium or whether s/he must first successfully complete further English–as–a-further or second language (EAL/ESL) coursework or testing. Some institutions use a mixture of the two types of courses in the student's early terms. Commercial, external tests are available in many parts of the world but can be expensive. Local evaluations are performed by staff at the intended institution. Exemptions from further testing or EAL/ESL courses are often given if a student is in a Canadian secondary school, based on the student's interim Gr 12 English (and possibly other) marks. Some institutions use a combination of methods. In addition, many students write a Language Proficiency Index (LPI) test in their Grade 12 year to assist institutions in assessing their general English skills (not specifically EAL/ESL-related skills). Each method has its champions. There are no generally accepted criteria in use by B.C. postsecondary institutions.

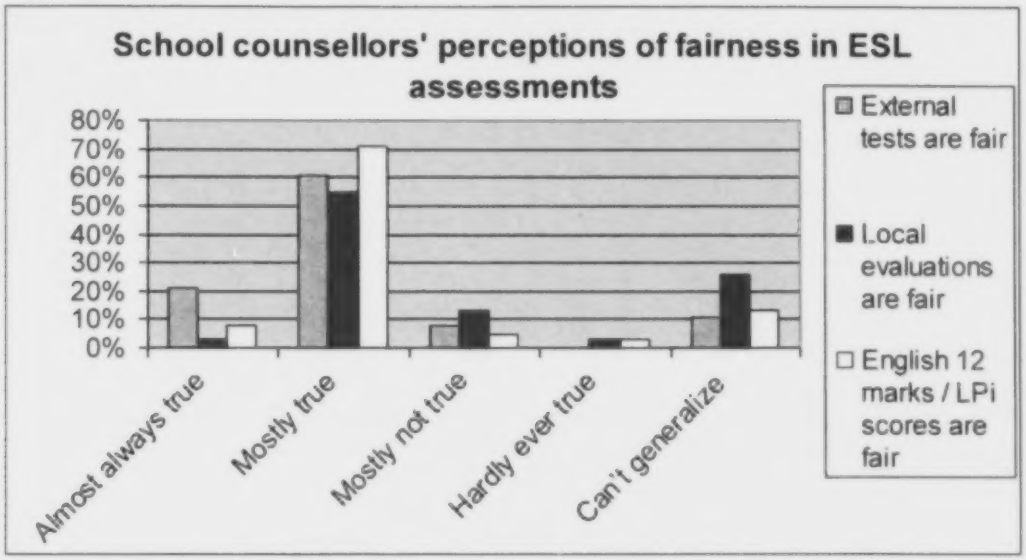
School Counsellor Survey Question 18
If a student's primary language is not English, what is your view of the process used by the institutions to screen the student for general program entry versus ESL program entry, i.e. how the institution assesses their English skills?

- *Processes using external ESL tests such as TOEFL, IELTS, TSE are fair.*
- *Processes using local evaluations are fair.*
- *Exemptions to ESL testing that are granted on the basis of interim English 12 marks or final LPI scores are fair.*

Table 71

	Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Can't generalize
Use of external tests is fair	21%	61%	8%	0%	11%
Using a local evaluation is fair	3%	55%	13%	3%	26%
Use of interim English 12 mark or LPI score is fair	8%	71%	5%	3%	13%

Figure 41



Local evaluations obviously vary by postsecondary institution, so it is not surprising that this method of evaluation is the most difficult to generalize about. External tests and use of interim English 12 and/or LPI are viewed as being fairer than local assessment, but none of these methods is seen as particularly unfair.

The recent BCCAT study *"Benchmarking First Year English"* is also of interest, showing in great detail the differences between four institutions and the ways that students who complete ESL programs at those institutions may transition into typical first year bachelor's degree level English courses, both at the home institution and by transferring to other institutions. A lack of consistency is evident, that reflects the concerns expressed earlier regarding English requirements for English-first-language applicants under the Specific Admission Requirements section.

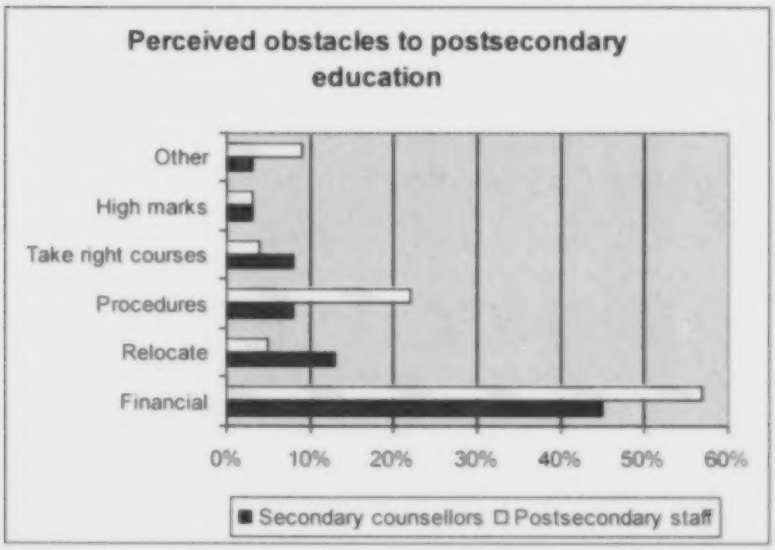
Perceived obstacles to postsecondary study

School counsellors and postsecondary staff were asked for their perceptions of the biggest obstacles that secondary students face when they decide to continue their education. Only one choice was permitted, but an open-ended option was available.

School Counsellors Survey Question 19/Postsecondary Question 11
What do you think is the biggest obstacle to be overcome when a secondary school student in your region decides to continue studying by attending a postsecondary institution?

- *Financial - tuition, materials, transportation, accommodation & meals*
- *Achieving sufficiently high marks*
- *Procedural - completing forms, providing documents, following complex instructions*
- *Selecting the right secondary school courses*
- *Need to relocate nearer to the chosen postsecondary institution*
- *Other (please explain)*

Figure 42



Financial barriers are seen as the most significant obstacle. Postsecondary staff are more likely to see more procedural issues as obstacles than do school counsellors, an unexpected outcome, especially since they consistently rate the postsecondary admissions experience and services higher than their secondary school counterparts.

"Other" obstacles cited include:
Table 72

school counsellors	Language 11 course requirement (at some research universities)
postsecondary staff	making transitions (3)
	clarity of vision/goal
	assuming responsibility for one's own learning
	adjusting to distance education format
	state of the economy
	perception (no explanation provided by respondent)

Surveys of applicants

Many institutions survey new students and some also survey applicants in order to monitor satisfaction with various services they offer and to assist with marketing. This can yield insights as to why applicants choose one institution over another and, if resources are scarce, where those resources might best be deployed to alleviate delays or other such issues.

Postsecondary staff were asked if their institution conducted surveys of applicants or (new) students that might shed light on their satisfaction with admission processes and if aggregate results could be made available to BCCAT.

Postsecondary Survey Question 19
Does your institution conduct applicant surveys (including applicants who do not attend or were not admitted)?
If so, would it be possible for BCCAT to review aggregated responses concerning admission and transfer experiences?

Postsecondary Survey Question 20
Does your institution conduct (new) student surveys?
If so, would it be possible for BCCAT to review aggregated responses concerning admission and transfer experiences?

Table 73

	Total survey responses	We survey our applicants			We survey our new students		
		Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure
British Columbia Institute of Technology	7	3	1	3	4	0	3
Camosun College	4	0	1	3	1	0	3
Capilano University	5	3	1	1	3	1	1
College of New Caledonia	3	0	2	1	0	2	1
College of the Rockies	5	3	0	2	3	0	2
Douglas College	5	3	1	1	3	2	0
Emily Carr University of Art & Design	4	0	4	0	0	4	0
Justice Institute of British Columbia	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Kwantlen Polytechnic University	3	1	0	2	0	0	3
Langara College	18	1	3	14	2	3	13
North Island College	8	1	4	3	1	2	5
Northern Lights College	2	1	0	1	1	0	1
Northwest Community College	4	1	2	1	1	1	2
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Okanagan College	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Royal Roads University	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
Selkirk College	2	0	0	2	0	0	2
Simon Fraser University	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
Thompson Rivers University	3	2	0	1	2	0	1
Thompson Rivers University – Open Learning	8	1	2	5	1	2	5
Trinity Western University	3	1	1	1	1	1	1
University of British Columbia - Vancouver	5	1	1	3	1	1	3
University of British Columbia - Okanagan	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
University of the Fraser Valley	13	3	4	6	2	4	7
University of Northern British Columbia	5	2	0	3	2	0	3
unknown	4	0	2	2	2	0	2
University of Victoria	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
Vancouver Community College	3	1	1	1	1	1	1
Vancouver Island University	8	1	1	6	2	2	4
Yukon College	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Totals	126	31	32	63	35	27	64
	100%	25%	25%	50%	28%	21%	51%

While some institutions gave clear responses, it seems that this information concerning student or applicant surveys is often not widely known by those who work with new students. These surveys are usually in the hands of the institutional

research unit and apparently do not receive wide publicity. Some surveys are conducted jointly by groups of institutions and in some cases, there are restrictions on what each institution receives and how it may use that information. Hence, it is not surprising that many staff are not very familiar with the surveying that is done.

Typically, those responding to this survey were not able to confirm whether survey results could be shared with BCCAT, but suggested instead referring that question to the institutional research staff of their institution.

Selected institutions were asked to provide aggregated data to BCCAT to supplement the information learned in this survey. Some of the findings from these other surveys is given in the next section of this report, "Review of selected institutional surveys."

Recommendation 14
It would be in the interests of each institution to give all staff who deal with new students reports of the pertinent findings from applicant and/or student surveys.

Recommendation 15
Institutions that do not regularly survey applicants and/or new students should consider doing so to gain knowledge that will assist them in providing responsive, competitive services to applicants.

Review of selected institutional surveys

This report has, so far, gleaned information on admission processes and practices by surveying professional staff in the secondary and postsecondary systems. How do the results of these surveys compare with perceptions of applicants and students?

B.C. Consortium survey 2007

Three B.C. institutions conducted almost identical and coordinated surveys of applicants and new students in 2005 and 2007. The primary thrust of the surveys was to gauge the institutions' market positions relative to demographic and other trends. It was especially helpful to them to see where each stood relative to the other two institutions and to measure differences between the 2005 and 2007 surveys. The 2007 surveys had a fairly low response rate – under 20% overall. However, for an applicant study in which many of those surveyed never attended the institution issuing the survey and only about 70% had any intention of attending at the time of application, that response rate is not unusual.

The results for one institution that relates to admission processes were:

Proportion of applicants giving rating of 'Very Good' (believed to be the highest rank on a four point scale)

Table 74

Availability of information	31%
Application and admission process	32%
Overall quality of service	30%
Promptness	28%
Organization	28%
Helpfulness	35%
Availability of courses	33%

The institution recognized that these proportions, while generally satisfactory, left room for improvement. In isolation, these results do not indicate problem areas.

Institution Student Survey 2005

A lower mainland institution surveyed students with the following general results relating broadly to admission processes.

Table 75

Difficulty getting sufficient information about the institution:	35% Occasionally difficult 2% Difficult

Accuracy of printed information	94% Entirely or mainly accurate
Employees friendly and helpful when giving information	90% Entirely or mainly friendly, helpful
Web site clear and helpful	88% Entirely or mainly clear, helpful
Printed information was helpful and easy to understand	88% Entirely or mainly helpful, understandable
Accuracy of oral information from	83% Entirely or mainly accurate

employees	
Sufficient printed information	72% Entirely or mainly sufficient

Preferred method of receiving information

Web site	32%
Email	45%
In-person	13%
Telephone	6%
Print	4%

	Scale High, Average, Low, Don't Know
Helpfulness of employees	55% High
Ease of registering in courses	40% High
Sensitivity to student's needs	37% High
Help to students in setting goals	35% High
Admission requirements for your program	22% High

The summarized results confirm the earlier finding in this report that online information is preferred. Printed materials appear to be in short supply, when available. Students at this institution do not seem to be very supportive of the admission requirements for their programs, but they rate employee helpfulness very highly.

Comparative community college survey 2007

A college took part in a survey which enabled a comparison of data with many colleges in the USA overall and also with colleges in the northwestern part of the USA. Most of the questions related to instructional, learning style, social or personal issues (finances, jobs, family attitudes etc) but a few related to admission processes.

Table 76

College processes for new students: Admission process, Financial aid office, New student assessment, First course registration	Satisfaction	BC institution	NW USA Colleges
	Very satisfied	23%	32%
	Somewhat satisfied	56%	52%
	Somewhat dissatisfied	16%	13%
	Very dissatisfied	5%	3%
	Totals	100%	100%

Transfer credit assistance - satisfaction	Satisfaction	BC institution	USA Colleges
	Very satisfied	13%	15%
	Somewhat satisfied	29%	23%
	Not at all satisfied	13%	12%
	n/a	45%	51%
	Totals	100%	101%
	Average score (4.00 highest)	2.01	2.06

Transfer credit assistance - frequency of use	Frequency of use	BC institution	USA Colleges
	Often	8%	7%
	Sometimes	22%	21%
	Rarely/never	41%	36%
	Don't know	29%	36%
	Totals	100%	100%
	Average score (4.00 highest)	1.52	1.55

Transfer credit assistance – importance	Importance	BC institution	USA Colleges
	Very important	56%	28%
	Somewhat important	24%	21%
	Not at all important	19%	51%
	Totals	99%	100%
	Average score (4.00 highest)	2.37	2.23

Generally, these show the B.C. institution lags somewhat behind the average U.S. college in students' assessments of admission and new student services, but the differences are not very large. Transfer credit and assistance are much more important to students at this B.C. institution than to students at the average U.S. college.

B.C. Provincial CISO (College and Institute Student Outcomes) survey 2007
Students who left colleges, university colleges (now known as special purpose teaching universities) and institutes in 2007 were surveyed. The survey is conducted annually, enabling institutions to compare themselves with the provincial average and their own previous rankings on a variety of service measures, such as library, study space, food services, etc.

Table 77

Admission services and application processes		Institution A	BC institutions
	Service was used	97%	97%
	Service was Good or Very good	70%	74%

Transfer credit assistance (help to transfer elsewhere)		Institution A	BC institutions
	Service was used	59%	35%
	Service was Good or Very good	63%	65%

Web site information & services		Institution A	BC institutions
	Service was used	96%	90%
	Service was Good or Very good	80%	78%

These comparisons are valuable to the institutions but are less valuable for determining whether there are systemic problems with admission processes, because if these problems were widespread, the averaging of the data would not permit differentiation between institutions. On the other hand, if the problems were limited to certain institutions, this type of survey would likely detect those problems. Each institution receives its own scores and the aggregate scores of all other special purpose teaching universities, colleges and institutes. There is no release otherwise of an individual institution's scores.

Canadian Universities (CUSC) Surveys

Many Canadian universities participate in an annual survey of students or first year students. Each year one or two questions might pertain to admission, such as the extent to which they (new first year students at Canadian universities) were satisfied by the application process. For the year 2007, three of the four BC research universities achieved the following results in comparison with universities across the country. Comparative results for the fourth research university were not available.

Table 78

		Very Satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Satisfaction with handling of application for admission	All Canadian universities	61%	32%	5%	2%
	Gp 1 Smaller universities	67%	28%	3%	1%
	Gp 2 Comprehensive universities	60%	33%	5%	2%
	Gp 3 Large universities with prof schools	56%	36%	6%	2%
	research university x in BC	**62%**	**32%**	**3%**	**1%**
	research university y in BC	43%	46%	9%	2%
	research university z in BC	**66%**	**26%**	**5%**	**2%**

Most students report that they are satisfied with the way their university handled their application for admission. About 9 students in 10 report that they are satisfied.

UBC Applicant Surveys 2006, 2007, 2008

UBC regularly surveys its applicants in July and thus amasses useful longitudinal data to measure how well their processes are performing in securing an optimal entering class mix. Response rates are commendably high – approaching 40% overall, including an expected lower response from those applicants who have already chosen to attend elsewhere.

UBC has learned information that would be almost impossible to gather otherwise- e.g. their "yield" strategy is more dependent on institutional reputation than on any other factor, so, as is often suspected, but rarely proven, recruitment activities aimed at applicants or those about to apply must be built on that reputation. Activities that might attract applicants, like making early offers, are less effective than those that further the institution's academic reputation.

UBC specifically asks whether the applicant:

- received timely responses to telephone and e-mail inquiries;
- received helpful answers to questions;
- liked the frequency of communication with the university;
- found it easy to reach people to answer questions;
- found communications with UBC to be excellent;
- received UBC's offer first and if there was time to consider accepting it;
- was affected in their decision to apply (and to what extent) by specified factors, e.g., campus housing; and
- was affected in their decision to attend (and to what extent) by specified factors, e.g., offer of scholarship.

Institutions that do not survey applicants routinely, perhaps surveying attending students only, ought to consider the funds spent in applicant surveying to be worthwhile investments. In UBC's case, data obtained from such surveys has helped to shape business practices and admission policies. Sometimes evidence from surveys is required to convince policy-makers of the wisdom of a proposed change, when examples of best practice from other institutions are not sufficiently persuasive.

Institutional surveys in general

Comparative surveys are of particular use and interest and more so if they are sustained over a period of years. Surveys conducted by individual institutions can also yield increased value to the system as a whole if they pose similar questions and if institutions are willing to share results of these surveys, even in a limited or restricted fashion, e.g., by agreeing to not publish un-aggregated

comparative data gathered through data sharing. Most surveys unfortunately ignore applicants and concentrate on enrolled students. They ask such a wide range of questions, from social issues to campus learning environments and food services that very few questions are asked about admission processes and experiences. Student services staff usually have input to the design of such surveys and would be well-advised to pay close attention to them when consulted.

Comparisons with earlier BCCAT reports

Survey of advising and admission personnel on administrative systems related to transfer: results (1997)

Many of the questions posed in 1997 were of a more detailed nature than the current survey and focused only on transfer students. In 1997, respondents estimated that 27% of transfer applicants experienced minor difficulties. Among these were delays in processing and assessment. Delays in assignment of transfer credit and delays in transfer admission decisions, or, at least, perceptions of these, are again evident in this report since18% of respondents think that it is mostly not true or hardly ever true that transfer applicants receive decisions quickly. A further 15% are non-committal. Slow admission and transfer credit assessment appear to be still a problem.

Major problems in transfer admission, including loss of credit, were believed in 1997 to affect about 9% of transfer students. In this survey 19% of school counsellors and 15% of postsecondary staff think that it is mostly not true or hardly ever true that transfer applicants receive full credit when they transfer. It is unclear whether this indicates deterioration in the situation for transfer students. In either case, the perceptions of respondents might be inaccurate or biased and the questions asked might be insufficiently clear. For instance, an unexpected loss of credit for a course taken in a defined transfer program is very different from a loss of credit resulting from a student taking courses that were never intended to be part of that transfer program.

BC Post-Secondary Admissions Information: High School Counsellor Perspectives 2003

This study looked closely at attitudes of school counsellors towards methods and effectiveness of the dissemination of postsecondary information to schools, students and parents. It identified several problem areas:

- considerable misinformation circulates among students and parents
- in some cases, material may not be updated frequently enough
- changes in admission requirements (may be) announced with too little lead time
- differing formats of various print-based and web-based sources make finding and comparing admissions information difficult
- the use of 'jargon' creates challenges and there is confusion about a number of key concepts and processes
- locating needed information is time-consuming for students, parents and counsellors
- the volume and complexity of admissions information available can be overwhelming
- some students are not motivated (enough) to identify the information they need
- postsecondary institution web sites are not user-friendly
- some post-secondary institutions have limited 'real person' help

- some students, particularly in rural areas, have problems using web sites because they do not have access to up-to-date technology or web skills.

Many of the same issues are found in this survey. Web site navigation might have improved somewhat, but the volume of material displayed has not diminished and the reliance on web-based information has increased compared with print. Jargon and unclear terminology persist.

Limitations of this report

Apart from the small, skewed sample sizes and the indirect manner in which the surveys were conducted, another issue that arises is the scope of what is generally regarded as the admission process.

Ease of course registration
Postsecondary institutions almost always distinguish clearly between admission (to the institution) and registration (in their courses), yet in the student's mind these are almost the same thing or are at least very closely related, especially as the student starts a program in a new, unfamiliar institution. If a new student is admitted with ease and permitted to register in courses, the overall experience of gaining access to new educational opportunities is heavily dependent on the student's success in course registration, especially in open enrollment ('smorgasbord') programs.

This study has not dealt with course registration. This is a drawback for the reason stated. Put more bluntly, an institution could have an exemplary admission process, but it would yield low satisfaction if new students were unable to enroll in the courses that they wanted and needed.

Orientation programs
Similarly, institutions offer orientation programs, ostensibly designed to familiarize the new student with the range of services available, but more fundamentally their purpose is to maximize student success and retention. Like registration, a good admission experience could be negatively affected by a weak orientation process.

Both registration and orientation are beyond the scope of this report.

Summary of Recommendations

A. Recommendations mainly referring to **internal communications** in postsecondary institutions:

Recommendation 8
Each postsecondary institution should familiarize a broader group of its staff with the policies concerning deposits and the conditions under which they may be refunded.

Recommendation 13
Institutions should make their appeal processes known to all those who have dealings with new students and applicants.

Recommendation 14
It would be in the interests of each institution to give all staff who deal with new students reports of the pertinent findings from applicant and/or student surveys.

B. Recommendations for **individual postsecondary institutions**:

Recommendation 1
When postsecondary institutions review and revise their web sites, close attention should be given to making the information readily understandable to an average prospective student. Navigational consistency is also desirable. Where industry norms or standards exist, these should be followed.

Recommendation 2
Given current heavy dependency on online information, each institution needs to pay close attention to the presentation of admission information on its web site. Attention also is needed to ensure that appropriate updating of information occurs.

Recommendation 5
Postsecondary institutions should regularly discuss matters of common interest with school counsellors and other school personnel in their regions to enhance communication and to establish whether the differences in perception shown in this report are based on issues of significance.

Recommendation 11
Postsecondary institutions should routinely monitor the time it takes for transfer applicant admission and transfer credit decisions to be made and compare those results with their service goals and with the time required for decision on direct entry students. If required, appropriate plans for remedy can then be developed and prioritized.

Recommendation 12
BCIT should be encouraged to conduct a survey of transfer students (or students who enter BCIT with other postsecondary credit or experience, if not actual transfer credit) to determine whether their needs are being met and if different processes or policies, such as more transparency in transfer credit, might benefit the institution and its students.

Recommendation 15
Institutions that do not regularly survey applicants and/or new students should consider doing so to gain knowledge that will assist them in providing responsive, competitive services to applicants.

C. Recommendations requiring discussion among **postsecondary institutions jointly** and/or with BCCAT.

Recommendation 3
The postsecondary institutions together with BCCAT should investigate the feasibility of expanding the scope of the BC Transfer Guide to include a broader range of course and program equivalencies, taking into consideration the benefits and costs involved.

Recommendation 4
Postsecondary institutions should jointly explore the use of more consistent terminology, to assist applicants and prospective students.

Recommendation 6
Postsecondary institutions should consider discussions jointly with other institutions to make their admission processes more alike.

Recommendation 7
Application and other deadlines should be published by BCCAT on the EducationPlanner.ca web site, as they once were.

D. Recommendations requiring **discussion among postsecondary institutions and stakeholders** in the secondary education field (Ministry of Education, school districts, BCCAT).

Recommendation 9
A comprehensive and collaborative review of admission requirements by some of the larger research universities is overdue. Incremental changes made over a number of years have resulted in a set of requirements that is inconsistent and makes little educational sense. Admission requirements of these institutions have an effect on the school system that is disproportionate to the numbers of students that these institutions admit each year.

Recommendation 10

All postsecondary institutions should jointly review English requirements for applicants who have English as their primary language. The review should consider requirements for entry to the various programs and prerequisites for entry to the institutions' first year English courses and should include, in addition to secondary school course and grade minima, the need for further testing of English skills and the standards of achievement expected in such tests.

xxx

Suggestions for Future Research

A closer comparative examination of institutions' applicant and new student surveys would shed light more directly on applicant experiences and serve to highlight differences between institutions that could be of wide benefit. Comparisons with similar institutions in other jurisdictions would be especially helpful.

The current confusing state of entry requirements to standard first year degree program English courses suggests that this topic should be examined more closely to determine the extent of the issue and to suggest remedies, if needed.

References

BCCAT (1997 July) *Survey of Advising and Admissions Personnel on Administrative Systems Related to Transfer: Results* (Report) Web site: http://www.bccat.bc.ca/pubs/advisors.pdf

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Orum, J (2003 March) *BC Post-Secondary Admissions Information: High School Counsellor Perspectives* (Report) Web site: http://www.bccat.bc.ca/pubs/admissioninfo.pdf

Osler, C et al (2008 November) *Benchmarking First Year English* (Report) Web site: http://www.bccat.bc.ca/pubs/ESL-Benchmarking-1st-yr-English.pdf

Appendix 1

Individual responses to open-ended questions

Individual responses are separated by bullet marks.

School Counsellor Survey Question 4

Students for whom I am responsible sought entry to; what type(s) of postsecondary program(s)? (Please select all that apply)

other, please specify

- ESL
- International Universities

Postsecondary Survey Question 3

Students for whom I am responsible sought entry to what type(s) of postsecondary program(s)?..(Please select all that apply)

other, please specify

- Equally career technical programs and UT programs
- Program that assesses based on English, math, cler
- All of the above
- all of above
- all programs offered
- entry into professional post-degree program
- All university degrees
- see all potential students plus internal enquiries
- career program
- Bachelor of Business Administration, PDD, CBM
- all programs

School Counsellor Survey Question 6

Are you aware of any information sources that are unhelpful, confusing or inaccurate relating to students seeking postsecondary admission? If yes, please describe.

- The one most difficult issue is how different websites are and thus how difficult it is to navigate from one site to the next. Then there are some that are just plain difficult to navigate (BCIT one example). Then there are sites that only have telephone numbers and no email contacts and often the telephone is a recording that isn't helpful.
- TRU does early admission, but UBCO does not. If they've applied to both, they get confused...
- Some websites are confusing to navigate.
- sometimes difficult to understand what exactly is required for admission to community college university transfer programs, unclear websites and printed material
- Education Planner website is not always up-to-date. I have to give students a caveat and always refer them to the institution website for admission information.
- UBC has a very lengthy process to apply - students find it confusing and get discouraged. They first set up an account and then apply - it just seems awkward
- websites tend to be developed by those who are familiar with the institution. They believe that their design is logical and navigable. Unfortunately not the same people use these websites and for the most part the students and parents do not know the names of the program or the information they are looking for.
- University transfer credits
- Usually out of Province info
- Students find the UBC and Cap U websites hard to navigate

- not all institutions use the same language...prospective/new students. financial aid/ scholarships. Slowness moving between pages. Necessity of signing in or getting an account before accessing information. Paper calendars are vastly easier and faster to use.
- sites that are hard to navigate
- Difficulty with the actual costs of admissions, and tuition. This seems to be across the board, as if it is secret.
- It's the verbal information that students receive that is unhelpful, confusing and inaccurate. This often comes from counsellors, friends, relatives, teachers and anyone giving verbal info without backing it up with the p int/online info. There is also confusing info regarding prov. exams and requirements for admissions and the difference between admission requirements and prerequisites.
- Lack of having to ensure students search for prerequisites for course they are registering in.
- Some career counselling sites are vague
- certain websites hard to navigate -- hard to find programs, admission info
- I sometimes find UBC Vancouver website difficult to find info I need.

Postsecondary Survey Question 5
Are you aware of any information sources that are unhelpful, confusing or inaccurate, relating to transfer or direct entry students (i.e. Grade 12 students) seeking admission?
If yes, please describe.

- It is not easy for students to understand which courses are pre grade 12 university accelerated equivalences to Grade 12. There is no standardized numbering system across the province which enables students to identify levels at a glance. In the case of disciplines like modern languages or any type of course where there is progression of a linear type (laddering), students become confused due to the lack of clear numerical tabulating
- I don't think there's a way to get around it, but as course number or alpha codes change it can be very confusing to students
- We sometimes have a discrepancy between our web info and our printed info.
- Some departmental information is inaccurate, links are sometimes to out-of-date information, some information is incomplete. General information on our web site (put on by other areas such as Marketing) is sometimes inaccurate - programs posted before final approval for example - and links to appropriate information on the admissions and records site are often missing. We have programs that publicize that admission is competitive but actually guarantee admission to all qualified applicants by a certain date.
- Home page doesn't speak to people, it needs to be interactive 'Live' videos, explanations etc
  BCCAT has too much jargon, the glossary is too hard to find, the industry understands but the prospective student does not
- MOE ABE Articulation handbook since each high school seems to have their own course codes, especially when transferring older courses
- BCCAT is confusing for students and sometimes inaccurate.
  Our university's website is largely unhelpful.
- BC Ed Planner has limited information on graduate programs. The first two selections on the search engine should be collapsed into one section - students often have a hard time figuring out if a program is in a "specific" faculty.
  Also - college to college transfer guides would be most valuable to students. We are currently having students transfer in to complete degrees that are offered at NIC and students can not use the BC transfer guide to determine transferability - i.e. the bus management tables are not easily accessed or even known
- Vital info at different locations
- many students don't utilize written information on the web or through pamphlets and prefer asking the question in person or through e-mail.

- registering on line seems to be difficult.
- Changing government regulations concerning provincial exams
- BC Government site advising students that Math 11 Essentials is a viable form of math for graduation.
- Certain university calendars full of jargon terms and small print-UBC, SFU, UVIC. UVIC having a different credit system. Need for a university to university transfer process. Variations amongst Universities regarding post secondary transfer credits-i.e. UNBC 15cr, others 30 credits or sometimes a varied. Clearer process by Universities of admission for Adult Dogwood grads. Had a student a few years ago complete grade 12 with lower marks and not enough Provincial exams for direct entry to University. He came to CNC did numerous courses in ABE upgrading, courses which easily met Grade 12 levels, yet when he applied to UBC he was turned away for admission to UBC period due to the fact that he didn't have enough Provincial exams. I then graduated him with an Adult Dogwood as he had the courses. Even with 2 grade 12's in play he was still not accepted, as UBC deferred to his first grade 12 from high school. There needs to be a better linkage for students who leave high school, upgrade at a College and who want admission based on College upgrade courses. Lack of clarity regarding need for Provincial exams to be attached to College upgrade courses, yet the College upgrade courses are not articulated the same. Mature student admission categories need to be clearer -out of school for a certain # of years or out of high school -varies.
- Institution Calendars that are only updated once a year.
- I think there should be a link for the transfer guide on the top orange horizontal menu bar so it is instantly noticed...I had a problem finding it from the BCCAT website the first time.
- Students transferring in and out of BCIT have a difficult time finding which of their courses transfer to other institutions and vice versa.
- Our (BCIT) minimal presence on the BC Transfer Guide site.
- Prov exam requirement
- This question is hard to answer as Grade 12 students and their counsellors rarely check the website or printed material before calling for information.
- Different information from the high school sector than from the post-secondary sector regarding higher education.
- No
- I wouldn't think that grade 12 students would use BCCAT when they would more like just apply to the institute of choice. For equivalency to grade 12 for adults seeking transfer was also not a function of BCCAT that I was aware of...There is limited information on equivalency prerequisites that are used to determine previous course history.
- Transfer course information is not always up to date, sometimes inaccurate.
- Information about the transferability of some courses is out of date or incomplete

School Counsellor Survey Question 7
Can you identify any information gaps that, if filled, would make admission easier for students? If yes, please describe

- Online: specific academic advising contact (email and telephone).
  Important dates for application purposes.
  Why don't the PSI's get their IT people together to devise websites which are similar in design and the navigation process. When I go to a Safeway store, they're very similar to one another so I can navigate easily. This isn't the case with PSI websites - some very different.
- Snail mail acknowledgement of application, and the UBCO Nursing program needs to get in touch with applicants when they apply.
- It's not always clear whether Grade 12 English or Grade 12 Math is required when a student only has Comm 12 or Essentials/Applications of math. I am new at this job, so that may come in time...

- Need more specifics about high school pre-req's to get into post-sec general admissions.
- Different paths to graduation and how these impact on admission.
- clear expectations about high school courses required for admission and cut-offs for university transfer programs at college
- That's part of my job - I help make sense of everything for students - I am the gap filler.
- there should be an index that matches that of the calendars on the website. The Alphabetical listing assumes too much prior knowledge.
- More clear transfer course options
- consistent format/terminology among institutions would be helpful
- Summary of GPA's for entry from previous years on line would be helpful for 'future students'
- Most of the sites are too "busy"..too much other stuff everywhere. Why not a simple screen just for new students and their parents.
- Not really an information gap but ...More clearly laid out in "chart" form.
- how to read an admissions guide
  * how to read a calendar
  * how to use a transfer guide
  * how to use a registration guide
  * how to timetable
- Most do not understand major/minor and yet on most application students are asked to respond to this.
- I would like to see a comparative site that works across Canada. This way students/counsellors could access and compare information between provinces.
- if admission requirements are listed where the program is described
- direct links to school applications, list of specific courses needed for all programs
- Transferring between institutions is sometimes confusing.....
- entry requirements are so diverse, it makes it hard for kids to keep straight, and make a plan that covers all bases.
- quick response time on student questions. I get answers back faster than students do. (which is good for me and my students, but a hurdle for students and parents)
- Need to know pre-req's from Gr. 12 up front

Postsecondary Survey Question 6
Can you identify any information gaps that, if filled, might make admission easier for students? If yes, please describe.

- Pre grade 12 university course could be numbered in a way that makes them easy to identify and first and second year courses need an identifying mark that is standardized across institutions. Also online course outlines and other essential information helps students see what is involved. It also helps faculty trying to articulate demands from other institutions to identify what is being taught and how the courses are evaluated.
- Internal communications is a huge issue as we don't get the info in time to distribute it to new applicants. Applicants need a lot of lead time as they need to find housing, arrange for financing and/or child care.
- The pre-req's which are required from high school
- Possibly having older program specific guides available online (ex: Adult Basic Education).
- The differences between institutions with respect to Admission English Language Competency and the various methods of proving competency - we find applicants get confused, especially when they are applying to multiple institutions.
- We don't have information well organized for all admissions categories so that students can easily find all they need to know about admissions in one place. Since entrance requirements are program specific, and we have many programs, they are found only in the program section in the calendar, which requires digging in deeper

in the web site. For some programs, the way the GPA is calculated is not clear. There are also special groups (such as IB and AP students, out-of-province high school applicants) where only minimal information is provided. Our English language proficiency policy and how it pertains to entrance requirements for each program, remains a bit of a mystery to anyone reading entrance requirements, as it is not specifically addressed in the requirements for each program.

- Students are not exactly aware how much course work will it be to lets say become a doctor if they completely neglected work in high school, but that can not be fixed I am afraid.
- transfer credit between colleges
- More of a rubric type flow to the information. What do you want to do. Copy a shopping page format, people are familiar with that thinking
- Admission requirements on our web-site
- A better understanding of the academic and portfolio requirements and the construct of a competitive portfolio.
- International student landing site that is a direct link.
- Students do not seem to have a clear understanding of how the transfer of credits work. They do not know to talk to the receiving institution regarding whether a course will be accepted.
- Provincial exams mandatory or not
  When a requirement is math or Engl 10 but they have a higher level but at a different academic level i.e. Principles of math 10 and then applications of math 11 and so on.. Engl 10 and Communications 11. This seems to confuse students
- Students do not read the Transfer Help section first and so assume erroneous information
- On BCCAT, please include BCIT as a receiving institution, and also include Universities in the Business Management transfer guide section.
- sometimes more detailed information on what courses are deemed equivalent to entrance requirements.
- depending on the degree, information for High school students seems confusing judging by the queries I get.
- Where do/can they learn about BCAAT?
  2) When the information they seek is not on BCAAT or they disagree with the information, how do they know what the next step is?
- BC High School Graduation Requirements - confusion around provincially examinable subjects? required vs. optional
- Would like to be able to transfer college to college or university to university.
- BC Ed Planner needs to have up to date admission information - the BC transfer guide - i.e.: AArts/Science transfer needs to be more specific - UBC transfer into ENDS program will not offer block transfer - and most students do not know that the transfer process includes admission to 1. the university and 2. application of credits to the faculty program
- student can make more informed course decision, when transfer credits are assessed in a timely fashion
- Human Kinetics courses still need to be updated (they changed their program in 2005)
- Acceptance letters need to invite those with documented disabilities to register for services before classes begin
- Applied business technology program constantly changing and out of date
- Clarifying what an acceptable university transfer course actually is.
  - how to submit documents
  - how does the transfer credit process work for incoming courses
  - how long does an admission take
- transfer info for outside of BC
- I would love to see the following changes to the online transfer guide:
  1. Each institution listed as a sending and a receiving institution.

2. Include upper-level courses.
3. If at all possible, add Athabasca University to the database.

- It is not clear enough that our institution encourages transfer students to apply. It is quite geared up for direct admission from high school instead.
- BCIT having full participation in the BC Transfer Guide. For BCIT to have as many as their courses possible articulated with other schools.
- The difference between ELAS (English Language Admission Standard) to get into the university and LPI (language proficiency index) once admitted, before enrolling in English. Why don't we just have ONE test/evaluation that satisfies both?
- BCIT participating fully in the BC Transfer Guide. Having as many of our courses as possible articulated and on the transfer site.
- course selection for first time students
  - structure of post sec, i.e. certificates, diplomas and degrees and how one relates to the other. Terms like undergraduate, post graduate, doctoral
- BCIT is working on including our own database for student's to view
- All institutions need to participate and we should enter agreements with other provincial articulation agencies, such as ACAT.
- Information and a process on transferring co-op education work terms from one institution to another.
- Transfer information by course or program.
- University to University transfer credit
- There seems to be a general misunderstanding and lack of knowledge at the Secondary level of the system of Post Secondary credentials, programs, and career options.
- Many people still believe that they must finish High school before they can go on to University. I can't find any location that spells this out it is merely inference that might lead a student to conclude this.
- Some transfer grids are incomplete

School Counsellor Survey Question 12
Can you suggest either a change to admission processes that would make things easier for your students, or a way to encourage more of your students to take advantage of postsecondary opportunities?

- Principles of Math 11 is the biggest hurdle. Most of us in the working world don't use mathematic principles past what we learned in grade 9 (and I worked in admin and management for a major Canadian bank for 10 years).
  Although a change is coming in the 3 math streams, the problem will remain with the current design.
- explicit minimum standard for English 12 would be really helpful. Increase listing of admissible courses for admission for BC students (not just provincial courses). This would enhance the student pool institutions have to draw upon and increase access for students.
- More consistency!
- Students must have a credit card to apply. I had one student who had American Express rather than Master Card or Visa. We could not complete the application.
- Drop the language 11 requirement!!!!!!!!
- It would be nice if UBC accepted Applications 12 (i.e. mathematics –Ed.)
- with the increase of students in our school system from other countries, more flexibility of language experience should factor in for University entrance
- see former comment about page specific admissions
- similar admission requirements
  * more Humanities/Social Science provincial exam courses that UVic/SFU/UBC will recognize - something more for non-science students
  * same course numbering for understanding transfer credit
  * a number of students do not realize they do not need a language for most community universities such as Douglas/Kwantlen/UFV

- Students are still unclear as to why provincial exams are even being offered as options.
- Admission date for 1st year students need to be more clearly displayed on websites.
- Concerns about standards for entry drive too many students to online/distant ed. programs that have lower standards. Responses from our students indicated a clear reason for enrollment in these courses is "easier grades".
- Have both UVic and UBC agree on the English 12 LPI exemption. UViv is much higher than UBC.
- more available career fairs
- remove the second language requirement for most students/programs

School Counsellor Survey Question 19
What do you think is the biggest obstacle to be overcome when a secondary school student in your region decides to continue studying by attending a postsecondary institution?: Other, please explain

- Language 11 credit

Postsecondary Survey Question 11:
What do you think is the biggest obstacle to be overcome when a secondary school student in your region decides to continue studying by attending a postsecondary institution?
Other, please explain

- having a clear and realistic vision or goal.
- adjusting to our distance format (TRU-OL)
- making the transition from high school to post-sec
- to learn how to take responsibility for own learning
- 2 -5 a learning process & transition process
- economy plays a big part in the selection of program
- perception
- attitudes of social environment, perhaps

Postsecondary Survey Question 15
Based on your experience, do you think transfer students entering or leaving your institution encounter problems or undue delays with the process?
If yes, please describe and suggest a remedy.

- On the whole, I believe the institution responds as fast as it can. However, particularly in summer, the faculty have vacation time and we cannot take it at any other time of the year. Maybe more information to applicants about earlier administrative action might help. After all, the students have to be a bit organized too. They can't just expect everyone else to jump to when they themselves are late applying. Also some institutions are rather understaffed at peak periods.
- trouble following procedures and learning the lingo (esp. register vs. apply)...work on better documentation
- I find registrar's offices at just about every institution, to be rather slug-like when processing information
- Our BSN students have difficulty transferring their credit to UVic if the credits are from outside of BC. Even though our institution evaluates these credits and transfers them prior to them transferring to UVic, there is no guarantee that UVic will accept them. This is very frustrating and stressful for students not knowing whether they will be accepted into the UVic program.
- Evaluation of credit takes a very long time. I find the demand for original transcripts from out of province institution when a student has already provided those to another in province institution ridiculous. Similarly the fact that courses have to be re-evaluated by each institution. I would prefer one body doing evaluation and that be true for all BC institutions.
- Some are delayed because of slow responses about transfer credits and requests to work with advisor to plan programs at their new institution

- sometimes it doesn't transfer properly, out of province transcripts. Sometimes a delay in mailing services can hold it up.
- Sometimes transfer takes too long
- Problems: Lack of transparency in transfer of coursework, unclear/confusing paths/procedures to follow
  Undue Delays: In evaluation of applications, evaluation and posting of transfer credit allowing for early registration
- Often if applicants are wanting to receive transfer credit from other institutions they wait until the last minute and are upset because it may take a number of weeks to process due to high volumes of requests - usually in Aug. Cannot think of a remedy to this as it is up to the applicant to read/investigate the process before expecting immediate credit granted.
- Delays in getting transcripts, etc.
- assessing transfer credits and applying them appropriately to their chosen program
- Admissions is behind in making transfer credit decisions from VIU to other institutions; Need to catch up; hire staff.
- Sometimes, depending on the types of courses they completed at college. Articulation for non-traditional courses can take a tremendously long time. Registrar's office needs to streamline process and provide guidelines to departments doing articulations.
- For transfer students entering our institution, if the transfer agreement has not been articulated, the assessment process can be extremely lengthy - obtain a course outline, submit it to our Admissions office, then it is forwarded to the respective dept for assessment.
  I do not know if the process can be changed so that our students are not waiting 4, 6, 8, 12 weeks.
- students that are presently taking courses, quite often will not be able to register till their final transcript has been received...
- Transfer credit usually delay admissions in our institution. I would suggest more advanced work in transfer credit be done, as well as have our student management system speak with BCCAT so that the latest course information is up-to-date.
- Because many of our courses are not articulated, time is required to assess the transfer credit applications.
- It takes anywhere from 6-8 weeks for their transcript to be evaluated. Longer if out of province or country
- Yes, due to large amounts of transfer credit and to PLAR. Many institutions, particularly large research-based institutions, do not recognize PLAR.
- Because BCIT registers students into their full program, transfer students need to wait until we can confirm a seat is available for them. This is very frustrating for them.
- Transferring between institutions is never an easy process, but I don't think we have any "in-ordinary" problems or delays.
- The UBC, SFU, UVic still treat programs from other institutions with distain (disdain). They are inconsistent with transfers; accepting transfers without question when enrolments are down, but putting up barriers when enrolments are good. The cost is higher to the student.
- lack of resources in admissions related to assessment of transfer credit - especially out of country / province students & credentials
- A University to University transfer guide would help as students could see what they are receiving before all of the paperwork is done.
- The transfer credit process is absolutely abysmal at my institution. We are not given the authority or resources to "fix" it despite having the knowledge and skills to do so within my department. Enough said!
  The problems students encounter upon leaving have to do with "mythical" beliefs about how the process works. Students have grasped that they receive credit for courses base on the BC transfer guide but completely miss the concept of

applicability. We try to educate students about how the whole process and how changing your goal/course selection changes the entire context of the transfer process - students just don't get it. I think this is because parents, Faculty and friends often refute our claims based on their own "mythical" beliefs.

- Entering on a provisional basis to UNBC works well for transfer students that need the extra time to process articulation of course syllabi for classes not yet seen by our institution but the problem comes when students are attempting to transfer to another research university. A few institutions will not accept course work from 3 year transfers over and above 60 credit hours, regardless of the completion of work at a BC university. This makes it difficult for students needing to move to another institution (due to a work transfer or family change) and student often have to repeat and repay for course work they have already obtained due to the rule. this can cause financial hardship and cost time to complete the degree too.
- Most problems occur when students want to transfer to either SFU or UBC, and the University Admission staff are unhelpful and typically do not offer suggestions for problem solving.
- some institutes will not grant transfer credit until you are excepted (accepted) so you do not know ahead of time for planning what courses will transfer. Very hard to plan.
- The extra work involved is unavoidable and unfortunately it does result in problems and delays.
- sometimes, students leaving our institution and entering another do not receive all credit they may believe they are entitled to.

Postsecondary Survey Question 17
Based on your experience, do you think older students entering or leaving your institution encounter more problems than younger students?
Additional Comment

- they do - because as a generality, they aren't as comfortable with online processes
- Their Math and English skills need to be upgraded
- Obtaining transcripts is often viewed as more difficult or not possible to these students.
- Financial barriers i.e. dependents and living costs
- To a degree, perhaps they might. So much of the focus of recruiting is on high school students applying directly out of high school. These students are given much more support in getting into post-secondary education, whereas the student who takes time off after school is pretty much on their own when they decide to apply. I don't think the institution's policies are unfair or unreasonable, but I don't think these students necessarily receive all the materials, or get directed to the right resources, simply because they don't have someone to guide them through the process unless they ask for help. To some degree, this is less of an issue for transfer students, who are more familiar with how post-secondary works. The main problem transfer students encounter is they often make wrong assumptions that each institution operates under the same rules and procedures. They may also expect that they will be in the same place as in the old institution but often program requirements are quite different - even if they get full transfer credit, they may need to take additional courses to meet all the lower level requirements at the new institution. The information is there for them to find, but they have to be proactive as individuals as there is no one to shepherd them through the process. Older new students are invited to orientations, however, so for those starting in fall semester, that helps.
- Older students seem to be the most satisfied and happiest with our procedures.
- They tend to research their options and follow through with decisions etc.
- Older students are often more savvy about procedures and have an easier time with the postsecondary processes
- Some of our mature students have added responsibilities such as family or children and larger financial burdens

- Predominantly with technological, financial and time management challenges

- These problems would be personal in nature, not the institution.
- they require more support through advising
  - in the case where older students have full-time jobs, it's hard to find night courses other than Business Administration
- Support that is offered from High School counsellors is not found for those coming to an institution after being out of school for a while.
- Their admission is not clear cut so ends up being put to the bottom of the pile. More focus on mid-career students should be made at all institutions.
- perhaps they are confused
- It is the same however the older person is often more alert to inefficiencies
- Not to TRU Open Learning. We treat all students the same and are very fair to younger and older students.
- Maturity is an important part of success at post secondary education.
- As a general rule, older students have a very different set of life circumstances than a younger student surrounding their entry or departure from an institution.
- Age is becoming less of a factor in so many situations.

School Counsellor Survey Question 20
Please expand on any of your earlier responses with your comments or reasons.

- The main goal is still to attend one of the big 3 universities, but the marks are often unrealistic for the average student.
- ESL - concerned about students taking online English 12 and submitting interim mark - how legitimate is the mark?
  I think universities need to set a minimum standard for English 12 since it is required for graduation, students should at least be expected to pass English 12 and thus, graduate in order to be admitted to university.
- I incorrectly answered one question - there is a bit of a stigma towards students attending a community college.
  Douglas College continues to have the nickname 'Dougie Daycare' as an example.
- It continues to be difficult for some students to know what they want to do. The number of choices is increasing and the exposure to these opportunities is especially lacking in the smaller rural communities.
- Many Eastern Universities do not require a language 11 credit. It is a waste of time and many, many students cannot go to University in BC, except through the College option first. That can be messy.
- scheduling of courses in secondary schools vary and make inconsistencies
- Of(ten) students are not familiar with access to 'advising' when registration questions arise. In the school they rely on 'familiar' counsellors or other persons.
- The 'unfairness' of (accepting) excepting grades for courses from non-brick and mortar schools is a growing frustration. We see students achieving results in online/distance courses which are not representative of either their ability, effort, or commitment to learning. It is unfair to students who take rigorous school based courses to be judged against students who choose to take these courses via other routes. Although some marks in online courses are legitimately obtained, there are clear examples where marks achieved in these courses are suspect. I would suggest that online courses should require completion of the provincial exam (i.e. no opt-out option) and any large disparity should disqualify the "school mark". We have many students who complain that their peers are getting marks that are not appropriate or via tutors completion of work/assignments, etc.
- moving from a small rural community to any big city is quite daunting for most of our students

Postsecondary Survey Question 21
What factors would facilitate admission and transfer processes, but have not been mentioned yet?

- Better websites at universities and colleges. I often get transfer credit requests from outside BC and find that I have a difficult time finding out course details in some cases. It is often impossible to assign other than "Unassigned credit" with a year (1st/2nd etc.)
  Easier forms to fill out. Langara uses the edco forms developed by BCCAT and these are a nightmare to use and fill out- especially by faculty who are not really good at word processing. This discourages faculty from making necessary changes to clarify catalogue entries, course descriptions and course numbering systems because struggling through the paperwork is daunting and our academic workload is already heavy.
- The fact that our internal decisions impact admission and transfer process decisions is an issue. Often budget constraints determine whether a program is run or not and these decisions sometimes are made very late in the process, impacting applicants if they have made arrangements to relocate etc.
- More consistent entrance requirements (both required courses or # of credits and minimum GPA) for our programs, or at least for our degree programs. This would make it easier to advise students so a standard selection of courses either would provide students with many choices. It would make it much easier to summarize entrance requirements for the institution. 2. Direct entry from high school for all our degrees (there are about 4 degrees that require completion of 1-2 years of post-secondary before entering the degree).
- Continuous admission, assessment of transfer credit once in the province and then applied to each institution.
- n/a. The system works well for our students.
- A wider spectrum of options, like no admission requirements, but program and course requirements which would 'place' students where they are with a program that would move them through to their desired outcome. E.g. if they have math skills but not English they could do Math while improving their English without wasting a semester or two upgrading. They often see that as overwhelming and too big a challenge.
- the elimination of provincial exams should allow for earlier decisions and admission confirmations
- Emily Carr University being listed as both sending and receiving (all Universities alike).
- It would be nice if the BC Transfer Guide had all universities & colleges listed in the sending and receiving institutions section. Many students transfer courses away from the main universities and the current transfer guide system does not support this.
- Better functioning of the PASBC application system. It seems to be missing applications and going off line for significant blocks of time.
- If all institutions keep their BCCAT info up-to-date it would be an easier process
- Students who work with an advisor at both the sending and the receiving institution have the smoothest transition.
- policy on acceptance of all college level classes - no loss of credits
- Students seem to be hesitant to contact all post secondary institutions attended to provide the official documentation. We often have them send in one transcript and that will indicate other universities or colleges attended and we need all documents.
- A comprehensive national transfer system
  Early/earlier admission
  Simpler application processes
- transfer credits across Canada, or at the very least with Alberta.
- students need comprehensive and timely advising services to make informed decisions
- More staff in the admissions and articulation department within the Registrars office
- Counsellors at secondary and colleges more familiar with process.

- Streamlining and more universal standards for particular "class" of post sec institution. If a student has successfully achieved admission at 1 university that is similar to another then it should be easier to gain admission to another
- None that I'm aware of.
- Increased communication between admissions/recruitment personnel and high school advisors.
- clearer articulation between institutions
- Training with front line admission staff
- Dedicated resources to keep transfer information up to date.
- Some central repository for the truths of post secondary ed that answer questions posed by students such as, "don't you think that they will understand the two years of F's on my transcripts because I'm getting A's now; or my teacher at X institution gave me permission to take this easier course and now YY institution, etc is telling me that they weren't right, but my teacher said so; the course I took at X institution has the same title as Y institution why didn't I get credit; why didn't you tell me...??
- I think process is fine as it is.
- Closer monitoring of web based information. More emphasis placed on articulation committees to complete their work in a timely manner.
- consistent percentage-to-letter grade values across all institutions in the system. A 90% grade at Selkirk is equal to an "A" letter grade, whereas 90% would earn an A+ at just about any other institution. Thus, a Selkirk student who transfers elsewhere with a "A" grade here may have in fact earned an "A+" grade if s/he'd taken the course at another institution, or should be considered to have attained an "A+" at the receiving institution.

Appendix 2

Text version of survey instrument distributed to secondary school counsellors and other secondary school staff

Question 1: My recent professional experience that relates to assisting students with entry to postsecondary institutions has been as a

career / resource adviser or assistant
administrator
counsellor
other, please specify

Question 2: This experience was chiefly in

public school(s)
independent / private school(s)
other, please specify

Question 3: This experience was chiefly in the geographic region

Fraser Valley
Greater Vancouver (Lower Mainland)
Kootenays/Rockies
Northern B.C.
Sunshine Coast, Howe Sound
Thompson/Okanagan/Cariboo
Vancouver Island North, Central Coast
Vancouver Island South
Yukon

Question 4: Students for whom I am responsible sought entry to what type(s) of postsecondary program(s)? (Please select all that apply)

trades / vocational
upgrading or adult basic education
general academic (whether planning to transfer later or not)
technical & professional (e.g. Nursing, Engineering)
programs that select on assessed skills (e.g. art, dance, music performance)
other, please specify

Question 5: What do you think about the information that institutions display on their web sites for prospective students and others?

It is easy to access and find information.
It is timely and up-to-date.
For the average student, it is easy to understand
Navigating their various sites is similar and predictable.
It is better than printed material.
Students prefer on-line information.

Responses:

Almost always true Mostly true Mostly not true Hardly ever true

Question 6: Are you aware of any information sources that are unhelpful, confusing or inaccurate relating to students seeking postsecondary admission?

If yes, please describe.

Question 7: Can you identify any information gaps that, if filled, would make admission easier for students?

Yes No

Question 8: What do you think of the terminology used, the admission processes and the admission requirements of the institutions?

The terminology they use is similar and easy to understand.
Use of more standard terminology would be desirable.
The admission processes they use are similar.
More similar admission processes would be desirable.
The courses they require for admission are similar.
More similar course requirements for admission would be desirable.

Responses:
Almost always true Mostly true Mostly not true Hardly ever true Cannot generalize

Question 9: What do you think about the timing of the admission process for current Grade 12 students who are planning to attend postsecondary institutions?

School visits occur and information is distributed at the right time of year.
Applications are accepted at the right time of year.
Offers are made at the right time of year and this timing is consistent with offers received from other provinces.
Students are not forced to pay deposits too early or before they have received all offers.
Institutions readily return deposits to students who receive better offers from other institutions.
Institutions show leniency when applicants miss deadlines or misunderstand instructions.

Responses:
Almost always true Mostly true Mostly not true Hardly ever true Cannot generalize

Question 10: What do you think about the admission requirements of the various institutions for current Grade 12 students?

The requirements are consistent and well-integrated across the Province.
The requirements make educational sense and support the schools' goals and Province's curriculum.
Students have ample choice of secondary school courses that lead into their postsecondary fields of study.
Students in my school/district may take courses that enable them to attend any postsecondary institution.
Students have plenty of flexibility if they change their plans while attending secondary school.
Requirements don't change much year-to-year but if they do change, the institutions give plenty of lead-time to schools.

Responses:
Almost always true Mostly true Mostly not true Hardly ever true Cannot generalize

Question 11: What do you think about the specific admission requirements of the various institutions for current Grade 12 students?

The institutions have clear and consistent positions on their use of Provincial exams.
Making the Provincial exams mostly optional does not affect a student's level of preparation for postsecondary education.
The institutions have clear and consistent positions on the minimum standard of English (often measured by English 12 and/or LPI test) necessary to succeed in their programs.
The institutions have clear and consistent positions on the minimum standard of Mathematics (often measured by Principles of Math 11) necessary for success in their programs.
The institutions have clear and consistent positions on the minimum level of 'foreign' language education (often measured by French 11 etc) necessary for success in their programs.

Responses:
Almost always true Mostly true Mostly not true Hardly ever true Cannot generalize

Question 12: Can you suggest either a change to admission processes that would make things easier for your students, or a way to encourage more of your students to take advantage of postsecondary opportunities?

If yes, please describe.

Question 13: How do the postsecondary institutions in general respond when Grade 11 or 12 students have questions?

They respond quickly and accurately to telephone inquiries.
They respond quickly and accurately to e-mail inquiries.
They respond quickly and accurately to in-person inquiries.
They respond quickly and accurately to written inquiries that accompany their documents or application materials.
They have hours of business that make it easy for a Grade 12 to communicate with them.
They treat everyone respectfully, as valued individuals.

Responses:
Almost always true Mostly true Mostly not true Hardly ever true Cannot generalize

Question 14: Schools have no common rules for reporting interim marks in a course. Those marks may be cumulative or not, often depending on the software package used. Interim marks are heavily used by postsecondary institutions to select new students and award scholarships. How fair is this?

It is fair to treat interim marks equally - eventually all the institutions will receive final marks for verification
Because many selective institutions also make offers on self-reported marks, variations in the way interim marks are reported are not serious.
Inconsistency in grading is inevitable, due to the wide variety of teachers, subjects and schools.

Responses:
Almost always true Mostly true Mostly not true Hardly ever true Cannot generalize

Question 15: What do you think about the fairness of the admission process at the institutions when considering Grade 12 students for limited, selective programs, such as Nursing, Commerce, Dental Hygiene or Engineering?

Selection processes in general are fair.
Random selection from a pool of qualified applicants is fair.
A wait list or preference given to a persistent applicant is fair.
Selection based in part on audition or interview is fair.
Selection based only on selected school marks is fair.
Selection based in part on broader criteria (extra-curricular, community service) is fair.

Responses:
Almost always true Mostly true Mostly not true Hardly ever true Cannot generalize

Question 14: Many students attend a local postsecondary institution, such as a college, with the intention of transferring to another institution, such as a university, a year or two later. What is your opinion of students' experiences?

Students receive full course credit when they transfer.
Students make easier transitions when they first attend a local institution.
Students achieve their goals more easily if they first attend a local institution.
The overall cost of postsecondary education is reduced if a student first attends a local institution.
Postsecondary institutions treat transfer students equitably compared with students who entered directly from Grade 12.
There is no stigma attached to a student who first attends a local institution.

Responses:
Almost always true Mostly true Mostly not true Hardly ever true Cannot generalize

Question 15: Based on your experience, do you think transfer students entering or leaving your institution encounter problems or undue delays with the process?

Yes No If yes, please describe and suggest a remedy

Question 16: What do you think about the admission conditions set by your institution? (i.e. When an offer is made before final results are known at the applicant's previous school / institution.)

Our admission conditions are fair and reasonable.
We only revoke conditional offers in clear-cut and justifiable situations.

Responses:
Almost always true Mostly true Mostly not true Hardly ever true Cannot generalize

Question 16: What do you think about admission conditions set by the postsecondary institutions? (i.e. An offer that is made before final results are known might be revoked or withdrawn if the final results are unsatisfactory).

Any admission conditions are fair and reasonable.
Institutions only revoke conditional offers in clear-cut and justifiable situations.

Responses:
Almost always true Mostly true Mostly not true Hardly ever true Cannot generalize

Question 17: Many students attend a local postsecondary institution, such as a college, with the intention of transferring to another institution, such as a university, a year or two later. What is your opinion of students' experiences?

Students receive full course credit when they transfer.
Students make easier transitions when they first attend a local institution.
Students achieve their goals more easily if they first attend a local institution.
The overall cost of postsecondary education is reduced if a student first attends a local institution.
Institutions that accept transfer students treat them equally compared with students who entered directly from Grade 12.
There is no stigma attached to a student who first attends a local institution.

Responses:
Almost always true Mostly true Mostly not true Hardly ever true Cannot generalize

Question 18: If a student's primary language is not English, what is your view of the process used by the institutions to screen the student for general program entry versus ESL program entry, i.e. how the institution assesses their English skills?

Processes using external ESL tests such as TOEFL, IELTS, TSE are fair.
Processes using local evaluations are fair.
Exemptions to ESL testing that are granted on the basis of interim English 12 marks or final LPI scores are fair.

Responses:
Almost always true Mostly true Mostly not true Hardly ever true Cannot generalize

Question 19: What do you think is the biggest obstacle to be overcome when a secondary school student in your region decides to continue studying by attending a postsecondary institution?

Achieving sufficiently high marks.
Financial - tuition, materials, transportation, accommodation & meals
Need to relocate nearer to the chosen postsecondary institution
Procedural - completing forms, providing documents, following complex instructions
Selecting the right secondary school courses
Other, please explain

Question 20: Please expand on any of your earlier responses with your comments or reasons.

Thank you very much for completing this survey!

Appendix 3

Survey instrument - secondary school counsellors

Cover email forwarded to members of the British Columbia School Counsellors' Association via their list serve:

Please participate in a survey for the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer!

It is part of an environmental scan to determine if there is a need to investigate more deeply into whether there are flaws in the processes and systems that support admission to our public postsecondary institutions (colleges, universities etc) in BC and Yukon.

The survey is at
http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/?p=WEB228HZWDQPZ5

All secondary counsellors, career/resource advisers or assistants or any school or district administrators may complete this survey - diversity of viewpoint can be enlightening!

Those responding should be aware of students' experiences, such as pitfalls or triumphs they might have encountered, when they sought information or applied for admission.

The survey will be open until Wed 3 December 2008. It should take 10-15 minutes to complete.

I would greatly appreciate any effort you could take to draw this to the attention of your colleagues who might not be listserve users but who assist students as they make their transitions to postsecondary education.

Thank you.

Nick Heath
Nicholas Heath Consulting Services Inc.
Coquitlam BC

Cover email forwarded to members of the British Columbia Principals and Vice Principals Association via their list serve:

I would like to draw to your attention to a survey, commissioned by the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer.

It is part of an environmental scan to determine if there is a need to investigate more deeply for possible flaws in the processes and systems that support admission to our public postsecondary institutions (colleges, universities etc) in BC and Yukon.

The survey is at
http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/?p=WEB228HZWDQPZ5

All secondary counsellors, career/resource advisers or assistants or any school or district administrators may complete this survey - diversity of viewpoint can be enlightening!

Those responding should be aware of students' experiences, such as pitfalls or triumphs they might have encountered, when they sought information or applied for admission.

The survey will be open until Wed 3 December 2008. It should take 10 -15 minutes to complete.

I would greatly appreciate any effort you could take to draw this to the attention of any personnel in your school/district who assist with students making transitions to postsecondary education.

Thank you.
Nick Heath

Nicholas Heath Consulting Services Inc.
Coquitlam BC

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Admission Survey

Distribution: This survey is being distributed primarily via the BC School Counsellors' Association listserve but is open to all who work with secondary school students in British Columbia and the Yukon Territory.

Purpose: This survey is intended to indirectly measure applicant satisfaction with the admission and information services provided by BC/YT public postsecondary institutions (i.e. public colleges and universities) so that the institutions as a whole may identify systemic issues or process deficiencies that could be affecting service to students and work cooperatively to further examine and ultimately to improve those processes.

We value your time: Your response should take only about 10 - 15 minutes. Thank you for your cooperation. Your opinions and experiences are truly important to us.

Consent: Your participation is voluntary. Your completed or partly completed survey constitutes consent to include a tally of your responses in an analysis or report of the results. You may discontinue your participation at any time.

Privacy: As this survey is administered over the Internet, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, although measures have been taken to minimize any breach of security or confidentiality. To protect your privacy, please do not give your name or other identification in the body of the survey. Results will be reported in aggregate only.

Questions: Questions and requests to receive research results may be directed to BCCAT's contractor, Nick Heath nheath@sfu.ca

Start Survey!

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Admission Survey

Questions marked with an asterisk (*) are mandatory.

1

* My **recent professional experience** that relates to assisting students with entry to postsecondary institutions has been as a

- ☐ counsellor
- ☐ career / resource adviser or assistant
- ☐ administrator
- ☐ other, please specify

2

* This **experience** was chiefly in

- ☐ public school(s)
- ☐ independent / private school(s)
- ☐ school district level
- ☐ other, please specify

3

* This experience was chiefly in the **geographic region**

Fraser Valley
Greater Vancouver (Lower Mainland)
Kootenays/Rockies
Northern B.C.
Sunshine Coast, Howe Sound
Thompson/Okanagan/Cariboo
Vancouver Island North, Central Coast
Vancouver Island South
Yukon

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Admission Survey

4

Students for whom I am responsible sought entry to – what **type(s) of postsecondary program(s)**? (Please select all that apply)

- ☐ trades / vocational
- ☐ upgrading or adult basic education
- ☐ general academic (whether planning to transfer later or not)
- ☐ technical & professional (e.g. Nursing, Engineering)
- ☐ programs that select on assessed skills (e.g. art, dance, music performance)
- ☐ other, please specify

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Admission Survey

5

What do you think about the **information** that institutions display on their **web sites** for prospective students and others?

1 Almost always true	2 Mostly true	3 Mostly not true	4 Hardly ever true	Cannot generalize

It is easy to access and find information.

1 2 3 4 ___

It is timely and up-to-date.

1 2 3 4 ___

For the average student, it is easy to understand.

1 2 3 4 ___

Navigating their various sites is similar and predictable.

1 2 3 4 ___

It is better than printed material.

1 2 3 4 ___

Students prefer on-line information.

1 2 3 4 ___

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Admission Survey

6

Are you aware of any **information** sources that are **unhelpful, confusing** or **inaccurate** relating to students seeking postsecondary admission?

YES NO

If yes, please describe.

7

Can you identify any **information gaps** that, if filled, would make admission easier for students?

YES NO

If yes, please describe

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Admission Survey

8

What do you think of the **terminology** used, the admission **processes** and the admission **requirements** of the institutions?

1 Almost always true	2 Mostly true	3 Mostly not true	4 Hardly ever true	Cannot generalize

The terminology they use is similar and easy to understand.

1 2 3 4 ___

Use of more standard terminology would be desirable.

1 2 3 4 ___

The admission processes they use are similar.

1 2 3 4 ___

More similar admission processes would be desirable.

1 2 3 4 ___

The courses they require for admission are similar.

1 2 3 4 ___

More similar course requirements for admission would be desirable.

1 2 3 4 ___

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Admission Survey

9

What do you think about the **timing** of the admission process for current Grade 12 students who are planning to attend postsecondary institutions?

1 Almost always true	2 Mostly true	3 Mostly not true	4 Hardly ever true	Cannot generalize

School visits occur and information is distributed at the right time of year.

1 2 3 4 ___

Applications are accepted at the right time of year.

1 2 3 4 ___

Offers are made at the right time of year and this timing is consistent with offers received from other provinces.

1 2 3 4 ___

Students are not forced to pay deposits too early or before they have received all offers.

1 2 3 4 ___

Institutions readily return deposits to students who receive better offers from other institutions.

1 2 3 4 ___

Institutions show leniency when applicants miss deadlines or misunderstand instructions.

1 2 3 4 ___

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Admission Survey

10

What do you think about the **admission requirements** of the various institutions for current Grade 12 students?

1	2	3	4	
Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Cannot generalize

The requirements are consistent and well-integrated across the Province.

1 2 3 4 ___

The requirements make educational sense and support the schools' goals and Province's curriculum.

1 2 3 4 ___

Students have ample choice of secondary school courses that lead into their postsecondary fields of study.

1 2 3 4 ___

Students in my school/district may take courses that enable them to attend any postsecondary institution.

1 2 3 4 ___

Students have plenty of flexibility if they change their plans while attending secondary school.

1 2 3 4 ___

Requirements don't change much year-to-year but if they do change, the institutions give plenty of lead-time to schools.

1 2 3 4 ___

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Admission Survey

11

What do you think about the **specific admission requirements** of the various institutions for current Grade 12 students?

1	2	3	4	
Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Cannot generalize

The institutions have clear and consistent positions on their use of **Provincial exams**.

1 2 3 4 ___

Making the Provincial exams mostly optional does not affect a student's level of preparation for postsecondary education.

1 2 3 4 ___

The institutions have clear and consistent positions on the minimum standard of **English** (often measured by English 12 and/or LPI test) necessary to succeed in their programs.

1 2 3 4 ___

The institutions have clear and consistent positions on the minimum standard of **Mathematics** (often measured by Principles of Math 11) necessary for success in their programs.

1 2 3 4 ___

The institutions have clear and consistent positions on the minimum level of 'foreign' **language** education (often measured by French 11 etc) necessary for success in their programs.

1 2 3 4 ___

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Admission Survey

12

Can you **suggest** either a **change to admission processes** that would make things easier for your students, or a way to **encourage more** of your **students** to take advantage of postsecondary opportunities?

13

How do the postsecondary institutions in general **respond** when Grade 11 or 12 students have questions?

1 Almost always true	2 Mostly true	3 Mostly not true	4 Hardly ever true	Cannot generalize

They respond quickly and accurately to telephone inquiries.

1 2 3 4 ___

They respond quickly and accurately to e-mail inquiries.

1 2 3 4 ___

They respond quickly and accurately to in-person inquiries.

1 2 3 4 ___

They respond quickly and accurately to written inquiries that accompany their documents or application materials.

1 2 3 4 ___

They have hours of business that make it easy for a Grade 12 to communicate with them

1 2 3 4 ___

They treat everyone respectfully, as valued individuals.

1 2 3 4 ___

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Admission Survey

14

Schools have no common rules for reporting **interim marks** in a course. Those marks may be cumulative or not, often depending on the software package used. Interim marks are heavily used by postsecondary institutions to select new students and award scholarships. How fair is this?

1	2	3	4	
Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	No opinion

It is fair to treat interim marks equally - eventually all the institutions will receive final marks for verification.

1 2 3 4 ___

Because many selective institutions also make offers on self-reported marks, variations in the way interim marks are reported are not serious.

1 2 3 4 ___

Inconsistency in grading is inevitable, due to the wide variety of teachers, subjects and schools.

1 2 3 4 ___

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Admission Survey

15

What do you think about the **fairness of the admission process** at the institutions when considering Grade 12 students for **limited, selective programs**, such as Nursing, Commerce, Dental Hygiene or Engineering?

1 Almost always true	2 Mostly true	3 Mostly not true	4 Hardly ever true	No opinion

Selection processes in general are fair.

1 2 3 4 ___

Random selection from a pool of qualified applicants is fair.

1 2 3 4 ___

A wait list or preference given to a persistent applicant is fair.

1 2 3 4 ___

Selection based in part on audition or interview is fair.

1 2 3 4 ___

Selection based only on selected school marks is fair.

1 2 3 4 ___

Selection based in part on broader criteria (extra-curricular, community service) is fair.

1 2 3 4 ___

16

What do you think about **admission conditions** set by the postsecondary institutions? (i.e. An offer that is made before final results are known might be revoked or withdrawn if the final results are unsatisfactory).

1 Almost always true	2 Mostly true	3 Mostly not true	4 Hardly ever true	Cannot generalize

Any admission conditions are fair and reasonable.

1 2 3 4 ___

Institutions only revoke conditional offers in clear-cut and justifiable situations.

1 2 3 4 ___

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Admission Survey

17

Many students attend a local postsecondary institution, such as a college, with the intention of **transferring** to another institution, such as a university, a year or two **later**. What is your **opinion of students' experiences**?

1 Almost always true	2 Mostly true	3 Mostly not true	4 Hardly ever true	Cannot generalize

Students receive full course credit when they transfer.

1 2 3 4 ___

Students make easier transitions when they first attend a local institution.

1 2 3 4 ___

Students achieve their goals more easily if they first attend a local institution.

1 2 3 4 ___

The overall cost of postsecondary education is reduced if a student first attends a local institution.

1 2 3 4 ___

Institutions that accept transfer students treat them equally compared with students who entered directly from Grade 12.

1 2 3 4 ___

There is no stigma attached to a student who first attends a local institution.

1 2 3 4 ___

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Admission Survey

18

If a student's primary **language is not English**, what is your view of the process used by the institutions to **screen** the student for general program entry versus ESL program entry, i.e. how the institution assesses their English skills?

1 Almost always true	2 Mostly true	3 Mostly not true	4 Hardly ever true	No opinion

Processes using external ESL tests such as TOEFL, IELTS, TSE are fair.

1 2 3 4 ___

Processes using local evaluations are fair.

1 2 3 4 ___

Exemptions to ESL testing that are granted on the basis of interim English 12 marks or final LPI scores are fair.

1 2 3 4 ___

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Admission Survey

19

What do you think is the **biggest obstacle** to be overcome when a secondary school student in your region decides to continue studying by attending a postsecondary institution?

- ☐ Need to relocate nearer to the chosen postsecondary institution
- ☐ Procedural - completing forms, providing documents, following complex instructions
- ☐ Financial - tuition, materials, transportation, accommodation & meals
- ☐ Selecting the right secondary school courses
- ☐ Achieving sufficiently high marks.
- ☐ Other, please explain

20

Please **expand** on any of your earlier responses with your comments or reasons.

Thank you very much for completing this survey!

Appendix 4

Text version of survey instrument distributed to postsecondary institution registrars and other postsecondary staff

Question 1: My recent professional experience that relates to assisting students with entry to postsecondary institutions is as a / an

counselor
career / resource adviser
program adviser or academic adviser
financial aid adviser
admission officer
registrar / administrator
other, please specify

Question 2: This experience was chiefly at (institution)

British Columbia Institute of Technology
Camosun College
College of New Caledonia
College of the Rockies
Douglas College
Emily Carr University of Art & Design
Justice Institute of British Columbia
Kwantlen Polytechnic University
Langara College
North Island College
Northern Lights College
Northwest Community College
Royal Roads University
Selkirk College
Simon Fraser University
Thompson Rivers University
Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning
Trinity Western University (private)
University of British Columbia - Okanagan Campus
University of British Columbia - Vancouver Campus
University of Northern BC
University of the Fraser Valley
University of Victoria
Vancouver Community College
Vancouver Island University
Yukon College

Question 3: Students for whom I am responsible sought entry to what type(s) of postsecondary program(s)?..(Please select all that apply)

trades / vocational
upgrading or adult basic education
general academic including transfer programs
technical and professional programs (e.g. Nursing, Engineering)
programs that select based on assessed skills (e.g. art, music performance, dance)
other, please specify

Question 4: How would you rate the information that your institution displays on its web site for prospective students and others?

It is easy to access and find information
It is timely and up-to-date
For the average student, it is easy to understand
Navigating our various pages is similar and predictable
It is better than our printed material
Students prefer on-line information

Responses:

Almost always true Mostly true Mostly not true Hardly ever true

Question 5: Are you aware of any information sources that are unhelpful, confusing or inaccurate, relating to transfer or direct entry students (i.e. Grade 12 students) seeking admission?

Yes No If yes, please describe.

Question 6: Can you identify any information gaps that, if filled, might make admission easier for students?

Yes No If yes, please describe.

Question 7: What do you think of the terminology used and the admission processes at your institution?

The terminology we use is easy to understand and is similar to that used by other institutions.
The admission processes we use are similar to those used by other comparable institutions.

Responses:

Almost always true Mostly true Mostly not true Hardly ever true Cannot generalize

Question 8: How does your institution respond when applicants have questions?

We respond quickly and accurately to telephone inquiries.
We respond quickly and accurately to e-mail inquiries.
We respond quickly and accurately to in-person inquiries.
We respond quickly and accurately to written inquiries that accompany applicants' documents or application materials.
We have hours of business that make it easy for applicants to communicate with us.
We respond in the same way to transfer applicants as we do to applicants from Grade 12.
We treat everyone respectfully, as valued individuals.

Responses:

Almost always true Mostly true Mostly not true Hardly ever true Cannot generalize

Question 9: What do you think about your institution's current admission requirements for current BC/Yukon Grade 12 students?

Our requirements are consistent with those of other comparable institutions.

Students have ample choice of secondary school courses that lead into our programs of study.
Our requirements don't change much from year to year but if they do change, we give plenty of lead-time to schools.

Responses:
Almost always true Mostly true Mostly not true Hardly ever true Cannot generalize

Question 10: What do you think about the timing of the admission process for current Grade 12 students who are planning to attend your institution?

School visits occur and our information is distributed at the right time of year.
Our offers are made at the right time of year and this timing is consistent with institutions in other provinces.
We do not force applicants to pay a deposit too early, before they have received all their offers.
My institution is willing to return deposits to students who receive better offers from other institutions.
My institution shows leniency when applicants miss deadlines or misunderstand instructions.

Responses:
Almost always true Mostly true Mostly not true Hardly ever true Cannot generalize

Question 11: What do you think is the biggest obstacle to be overcome when a secondary school student in your region decides to continue studying by attending a postsecondary institution?

Financial - tuition, materials, transportation, accommodation & meals
Procedural - completing forms, providing documents, following instructions
Achieving sufficiently high marks
Selecting the right secondary school courses
Need to relocate nearer to the chosen institution
Other, please explain

Question 12: What do you think about your institution's admission requirements for transfer students (typically transfer of 24 or more academic credits with a min C average)?

The requirements are consistent with those of other comparable institutions.
Students have plenty of flexibility if they change their plans when attending their first postsecondary institution.
Our requirements don't change much from year to year but if they do change, we give plenty of lead-time to the other postsecondary institutions.

Responses:
Almost always true Mostly true Mostly not true Hardly ever true Cannot generalize

Question 13: What do you think about the timing of the admission process for transfer students who are planning to attend your institution?

We accept applications at the right time of year.
My institution makes admission decisions quickly, allowing students plenty of lead time.

Our offers are made at the right time of year and timing is consistent with institutions in other provinces.
We do not force applicants to pay deposits too early or before they have received all offers.
My institution readily returns deposits to students who receive better offers from other institutions.
My institution shows leniency when applicants miss deadlines or misunderstand instructions.

Responses:
Almost always true Mostly true Mostly not true Hardly ever true Cannot generalize

Question 17: Based on your experience, do you think older students entering or leaving your institution encounter more problems than younger students?

Yes No Additional Comment

Question 18: If an applicant, whether transferring from another postsecondary institution or entering from secondary school disputes a decision at your institution

S/he has a right to appeal that decision.
S/he can have a personal hearing
Transfer credit can be adjusted through this process.
An admission decision can be changed through this process.
Appeals are heard by individuals who are independent and did not make the original decision.

Responses:
Almost always true Mostly true Mostly not true Hardly ever true Cannot generalize

Question 19: Does your institution conduct applicant surveys (including applicants who do not attend or were not admitted)? If so, would it be possible for BCCAT to review aggregated responses concerning admission and transfer experiences?

Yes No Additional Comment

Question 20: Does your institution conduct (new) student surveys ? If so, would it be possible for BCCAT to review aggregated responses concerning admission and transfer experiences?

Yes No Additional Comment

Question 21: What factors would facilitate admission and transfer processes, but have not been mentioned yet?

Question 22: Please expand on any of your previous responses with your comments or reasons.

Thank you very much for completing this survey!

Appendix 5

Survey instrument - postsecondary institution staff

Cover email forwarded to members of the British Columbia Registrars' Association via their list serve:

I invite you to respond to a survey, commissioned by the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer.

It is part of an environmental scan to determine if there is a need to investigate more deeply for any possible flaws in the processes and systems that support admission to our public postsecondary institutions (colleges, universities etc) in BC and Yukon. Currently, none are known. The survey will guide BCCAT to either probe more deeply or leave well alone.

The survey is at
http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/?p=WEB228J29MQWUW

All postsecondary counsellors, program advisers or assistants whether in the central administrative units (e.g. Admissions, Financial Aid etc) or in the departmental units associated with specific disciplines (e.g. Dept of History) may complete this survey - diverse viewpoints can be enlightening! Administrators, registrars etc please also feel free to participate.

Your help in disseminating this survey is requested. BCCAT would like **numerous** responses from each member institution, rather than a single institutional response.

Those responding should be aware of students' experiences, such as pitfalls or triumphs they might have encountered, in seeking information, applying for admission, or transferring in or out.

The survey will be open until Wed 3 December 2008. It should take 10-15 minutes to complete.

Thank you very much for reading this.

Nick Heath

Nicholas Heath Consulting Services Inc.
Coquitlam BC

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Postsecondary Admission Survey

Distribution: This survey is being distributed via listserves including the BCRA listserve. It is open to all staff at postsecondary institutions who assist students to make transitions to B.C./Yukon postsecondary institutions. A separate survey has been distributed to BC and YT secondary schools.

Purpose: This survey is intended to indirectly measure applicant satisfaction with the admission and information services provided by BC public postsecondary institutions (i.e. public colleges and universities) so that the institutions as a whole may identify systemic issues or process deficiencies that could be affecting service to students and work cooperatively to further examine and ultimately improve those processes.

We value your time: Your response should take only about 10 - 15 minutes. Thank you for your

cooperation. Your opinions and experiences are truly important to us.

Consent: Your participation is voluntary. Your completed or partly completed survey constitutes consent to include a tally of your responses in an analysis or report of the results. You may discontinue your participation at any time.

Privacy: As this survey is administered over the Internet, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, although measures have been taken to minimize any breach of security or confidentiality. To protect your privacy, please do not give your name in the body of the survey. Results will be reported in aggregate only.

Questions: Questions and requests to receive research results may be directed to BCCAT's contractor, Nick Heath nheath@sfu.ca

Start Survey!

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Postsecondary Admission Survey

Questions marked with an asterisk (*) are mandatory.

1

* My **recent professional experience** that relates to assisting students with entry to postsecondary institutions is as a / an

- ☐ admission officer
- ☐ program adviser or academic adviser
- ☐ financial aid adviser
- ☐ career / resource adviser
- ☐ counsellor
- ☐ registrar / administrator
- ☐ other, please specify

2

This **experience** was chiefly at (institution)

3

* Students for whom I am responsible sought entry to – what **type(s) of postsecondary program(s)**?..(Please select all that apply)

- ☐ trades / vocational upgrading or adult basic education
- ☐ general academic including transfer programs

- ☐ technical and professional programs (e.g. Nursing, Engineering)
- ☐ programs that select based on assessed skills (e.g. art, music performance, dance)
- ☐ other, please specify

British Columbia Institute of Technology
Camosun College
College of New Caledonia
College of the Rockies
Douglas College
Emily Carr University of Art & Design
Justice Institute of British Columbia
Kwantlen Polytechnic University
Langara College
North Island College
Northern Lights College
Northwest Community College
Royal Roads University
Selkirk College
Simon Fraser University
Thompson Rivers University
Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning
Trinity Western University (private)
University of British Columbia - Okanagan Campus
University of British Columbia - Vancouver Campus
University of Northern BC
University of the Fraser Valley
University of Victoria
Vancouver Community College
Vancouver Island University
Yukon College

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Postsecondary Admission Survey

4

How would you rate the **information** that your institution displays **on its web site** for prospective students and others?

	1 Almost always true	2 Mostly true	3 Mostly not true	4 Hardly ever true	Cannot generalize
It is easy to access and find information	1	2	3	4	
It is timely and up-to-date	1	2	3	4	
For the average student, it is easy to understand	1	2	3	4	
Navigating our various pages is similar and predictable	1	2	3	4	
It is better than our printed material	1	2	3	4	
Students prefer on-line information	1	2	3	4	

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Postsecondary Admission Survey

5

Are you aware of any information sources that are **unhelpful, confusing or inaccurate**, relating to transfer or direct entry students (i.e. Grade 12 students) seeking admission?

YES NO

If yes, please describe.

6

Can you identify any **information gaps** that, if filled, might make admission easier for students?

YES NO

If yes, please describe.

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Postsecondary Admission Survey

7

What do you think of the **terminology** used and the admission **processes** at your institution?

1	2	3	4	
Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Cannot generalize

The terminology we use is easy to understand is similar to that used by other institutions.

1 2 3 4 ___

The admission processes we use are similar to those used by other comparable institutions.

1 2 3 4 ___

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Postsecondary Admission Survey

8

How does your institution **respond** when applicants have questions?

	1 Almost always true	2 Mostly true	3 Mostly not true	4 Hardly ever true	No opinion
We respond quickly and accurately to telephone inquiries.	1	2	3	4	___
We respond quickly and accurately to e-mail inquiries.	1	2	3	4	___
We respond quickly and accurately to in-person inquiries.	1	2	3	4	___
We respond quickly and accurately to written inquiries that accompany applicants' documents or application materials.	1	2	3	4	___
We have hours of business that make it easy for applicants to communicate with us.	1	2	3	4	___
We respond in the same way to transfer applicants as we do to applicants from Grade 12.	1	2	3	4	___
We treat everyone respectfully, as valued individuals.	1	2	3	4	___

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Postsecondary Admission Survey

9

What do you think about your institution's **current admission requirements** for current BC/Yukon Grade 12 students?

1	2	3	4	
Almost always true	Mostly true	Mostly not true	Hardly ever true	Cannot generalize

Our requirements are consistent with those of other comparable institutions.

1 2 3 4 ___

Students have ample choice of secondary school courses that lead into our programs of study.

1 2 3 4 ___

Our requirements don't change much from year to year but if they do change, we give plenty of lead-time to schools.

1 2 3 4 ___

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Postsecondary Admission Survey

10

What do you think about the **timing** of the admission process for current **Grade 12 students** who are planning to attend your institution?

1 Almost always true	2 Mostly true	3 Mostly not true	4 Hardly ever true	No opinion

School visits occur and our information is distributed at the right time of year.

1 2 3 4 ___

Our offers are made at the right time of year and this timing is consistent with institutions in other provinces.

1 2 3 4 ___

We do not force applicants to pay a deposit too early, before they have received all their offers.

1 2 3 4 ___

My institution is willing to return deposits to students who receive better offers from other institutions.

1 2 3 4 ___

My institution shows leniency when applicants miss deadlines or misunderstand instructions.

1 2 3 4 ___

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Postsecondary Admission Survey

11

What do you think is the **biggest obstacle** to be overcome when a secondary school student in your region decides to continue studying by attending a postsecondary institution?

- ☐ Need to relocate nearer to the chosen institution
- ☐ Procedural - completing forms, providing documents, following instructions
- ☐ Financial - tuition, materials, transportation, accommodation & meals
- ☐ Selecting the right secondary school courses
- ☐ Achieving sufficiently high marks
- ☐ Other, please explain

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Postsecondary Admission Survey

12

What do you think about your institution's **admission requirements** for **transfer students** (typically transfer of 24 or more academic credits with a min C average)?

1 Almost always true	2 Mostly true	3 Mostly not true	4 Hardly ever true	No opinion

The requirements are consistent with those of other comparable

institutions.

1 2 3 4 ___

_____

Students have plenty of flexibility if they change their plans when attending their first postsecondary institution.

1 2 3 4 ___

_____

Our requirements don't change much from year to year but if they do change, we give plenty of lead-time to the other postsecondary institutions.

1 2 3 4 ___

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Postsecondary Admission Survey

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What do you think about the **timing** of the admission process for **transfer students** who are planning to attend your institution?

1 Almost always true	2 Mostly true	3 Mostly not true	4 Hardly ever true	N/A or No opinion

We accept applications at the right time of year.

1 2 3 4 ___

My institution makes admission decisions quickly, allowing students plenty of lead time.

1 2 3 4 ___

Our offers are made at the right time of year and timing is consistent with institutions in other provinces.

1 2 3 4 ___

We do not force applicants to pay deposits too early or before they have received all offers.

1 2 3 4 ___

My institution readily returns deposits to students who receive better offers from other institutions.

1 2 3 4 ___

My institution shows leniency when applicants miss deadlines or misunderstand instructions.

1 2 3 4 ___

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2008 Postsecondary Admission Survey

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Many students attend a local postsecondary institution, such as a college, with the intention of **transferring** to another institution, such as a university, a year or two **later**. What is your **opinion of students' experiences**?

1 Almost always true	2 Mostly true	3 Mostly not true	4 Hardly ever true	No opinion

Students receive full course credit when they transfer.

1 2 3 4 ___

Students make easier transitions when they first attend a local institution.

1 2 3 4 ___

Students achieve their goals more easily if they first attend a local institution.

1 2 3 4 ___

The overall cost of postsecondary education is reduced if a student first attends a local institution.

1 2 3 4 ___

Postsecondary institutions treat transfer students equitably compared with students who entered directly from Grade 12.

1 2 3 4 ___

There is no stigma attached to a student who first attends a local institution.

1 2 3 4 ___

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2008 Postsecondary Admission Survey

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Based on your experience, do you think **transfer students** entering or leaving your institution encounter **problems** or **undue delays** with the process?

YES NO

If yes, please describe and suggest a remedy.

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What do you think about the **admission conditions** set by your institution? (i.e. When an offer is made before final results are known at the applicant's previous school / institution.)

1 Almost always true	2 Mostly true	3 Mostly not true	4 Hardly ever true	No opinion

Our admission conditions are fair and reasonable.

1 2 3 4 ___

We only revoke conditional offers in clear-cut and justifiable situations.

1 2 3 4 ___

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2008 Postsecondary Admission Survey

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Based on your experience, do you think **older students** entering or leaving your institution encounter more **problems** than younger students?

YES NO

Additional Comment

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2008 Postsecondary Admission Survey

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If an applicant, whether transferring from another postsecondary institution or entering from secondary school **disputes a decision** at your institution

1 Almost always true	2 Mostly true	3 Mostly not true	4 Hardly ever true	No opinion

S/he has a right to appeal that decision.

1 2 3 4 ___

S/he can have a personal hearing

1 2 3 4 ___

Transfer credit can be adjusted through this process.

1 2 3 4 ___

An admission decision can be changed through this process.

1 2 3 4 ___

Appeals are heard by individuals who are independent and did not make the original decision.

1 2 3 4 ___

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2008 Postsecondary Admission Survey

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Does your institution conduct **applicant surveys** (including applicants who do not attend or were not admitted)?

If so, would it be possible for BCCAT to review aggregated responses concerning admission and transfer experiences?

YES NO

Additional Comment

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Does your institution conduct **(new) student surveys** ?

If so, would it be possible for BCCAT to review aggregated responses concerning admission and transfer experiences?

YES NO

Additional Comment

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2008 Postsecondary Admission Survey

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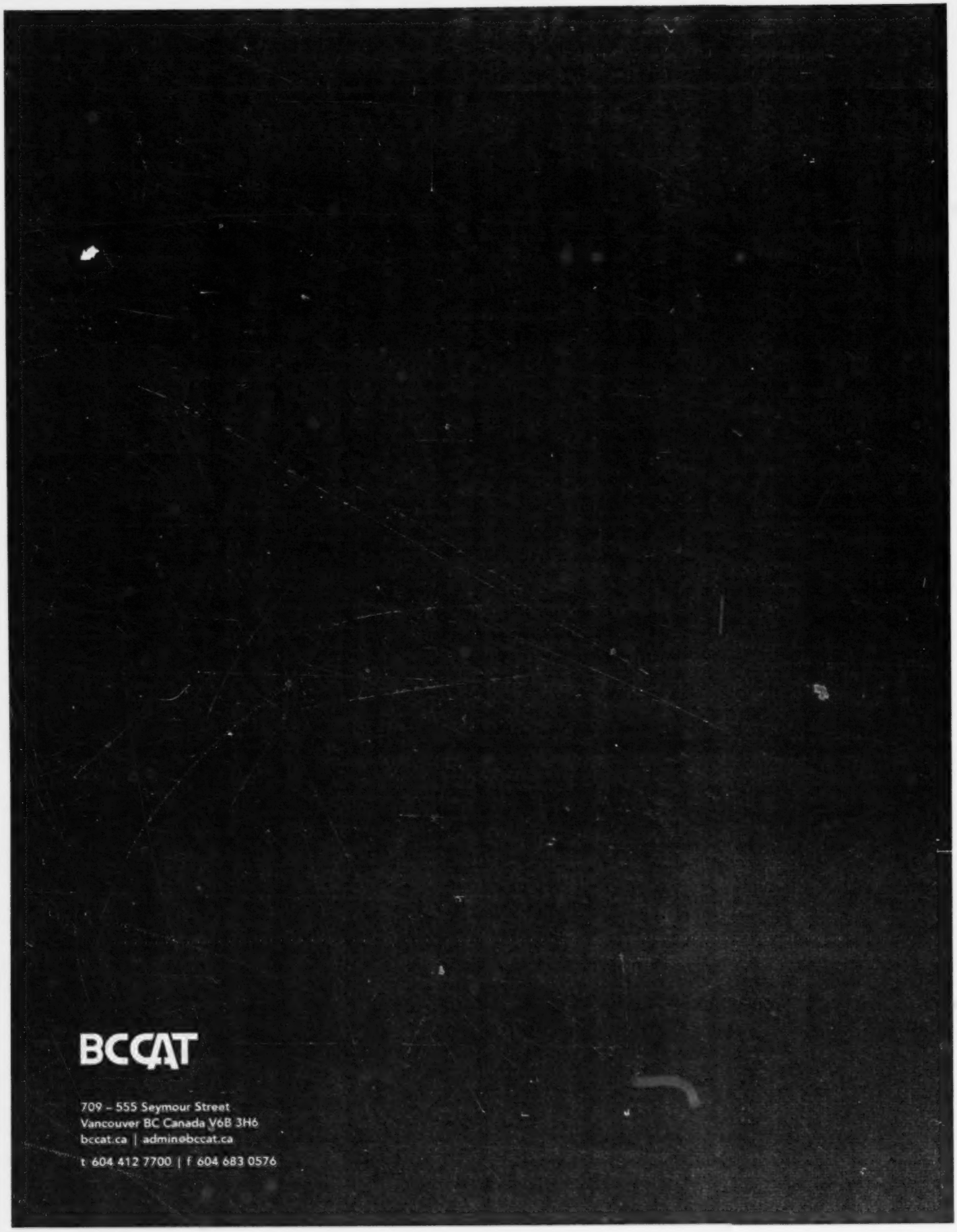
What factors would **facilitate admission and transfer processes**, but have not been mentioned yet?

22

Please **expand** on any of your **previous responses** with your comments or reasons.

Thank you very much for completing this survey!

Zoomerang



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